



NEWSLETTER NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC

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SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH

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Connectivity and corridors

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BUSINESS MEETINGS All are welcome to attend, have your say and hear what's happening in the NPA. Contact Peter on 95287341 or Gary on 95701813 for details. These meetings are now held on either the 1st or 2nd Monday of the month.

BRANCH MEETINGS: Come and meet other members from your local area, new members and friends are most welcome. These meetings are organised for you, are informal, informative and relaxing. An interesting evening is guaranteed and supper is provided. The venue for Branch meetings is the Multi-Purpose Centre, 123 Flora St Sutherland (near Belmont St) 3 minutes' walk from the railway station and with plenty of parking. All meetings commence at 8.00pm. Now held on the 4th Wednesday night every second month.

The next meeting June 24th, has been cancelled but the content is online. See inside for details

A 5 min walk from Sutherland Station. Contact:
ssvdney@npansw.org.au

The September meeting will be held on 23rd September and it will also be our AGM. Please consider standing for office. We are a friendly lot.

Free event. All welcome

Walks/Activities

Who would have thought when we sent out the last Branch Newsletter that the entire NPA Activities program would be closed down owing to Covid-19? No doubt many members have been out walking, alone or in pairs, but the official program was put to bed owing to limits on group size, the difficulty of guaranteeing “social distancing”, the problems of sharing transport and also the potential for exposure to Covid-19 on public transport. Noting that many members are in what is sometimes amusingly defined as being in the “vulnerable age” (though I for one don’t yet feel old! Editor) the decision was not to risk it. Indeed, we were not sure if our insurance would cover us if we did. We had closed the program, you will note, before the restrictions came into legal force.

That does not mean we have forgotten our members. Brian Everingham initiated a project amongst many walker to write up their favourite walks and that publication has been made available to all members. If you have not seen it yet do download it. The reports and the pictures are truly wonderful and it is a credit to the members who took the time to write.

The Flipbook version is available at <https://online.flipbuilder.com/lhry/nupg/>

If you want the PDF version it is at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bcQXNXQhXNcHatdo_A0hW4oeNV8EeoPN/view?mc_cid=7b58fcca60&mc_eid=4f710d6242

You will clearly remember that our Branch was going to host Matt McClelland who was talking about the Overland Track. He prepared a talk for us via YouTube. That, too, can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/UHVdDpOpGu4>

You will already have discovered that a number of members have prepared a variety of other ways to share walks with people at home during this time. Brian has completed a number of PowerPoint Slide shows that were sent to members by the NPA Bushwalking Bulletin and another to highlight is the delightful work done by member Vera Segoh. Thanks Vera! Check it at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Plfv38eKrmtcLW_g3g0qn8XPSmcm_p4K/view?usp=drivesdk
It is a report on the Crossing the Blue Mountains series of walks organized by Esther Chow.

Our Executive Officer, Gary Dunnett, has also come to the party. He writes “My favourite amongst all the long-established formal walks in Royal, in part because of its role in the history of the conservation movement, but mostly because it is simply gorgeous. There's a little licence in the definition of the path as in my mind it includes the adjacent sections of Bola Creek and the Hacking River. This collection has been slowly coming together as part of a thought bubble about a book on the Upper Hacking for the 150th anniversary in 2029.”

Once opened in Flickr you can play as a slideshow by pressing the little boxed arrow icon in the top right hand corner

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/garydunnett/albums/72157714153739653>

In the meantime you can keep up to date with the latest from the NSW government here <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/what-you-can-and-cant-do-under-rules>

Guest speakers for the Branch meetings

And on 24th June Ken Griffiths was to have shared his magical camera with us once more. It is too early to open up for public events and as we cancelled our hall booking we can't access our regular hall but Ken has provided his talk on YouTube and it is truly spectacular!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dC_xrDvKkiY

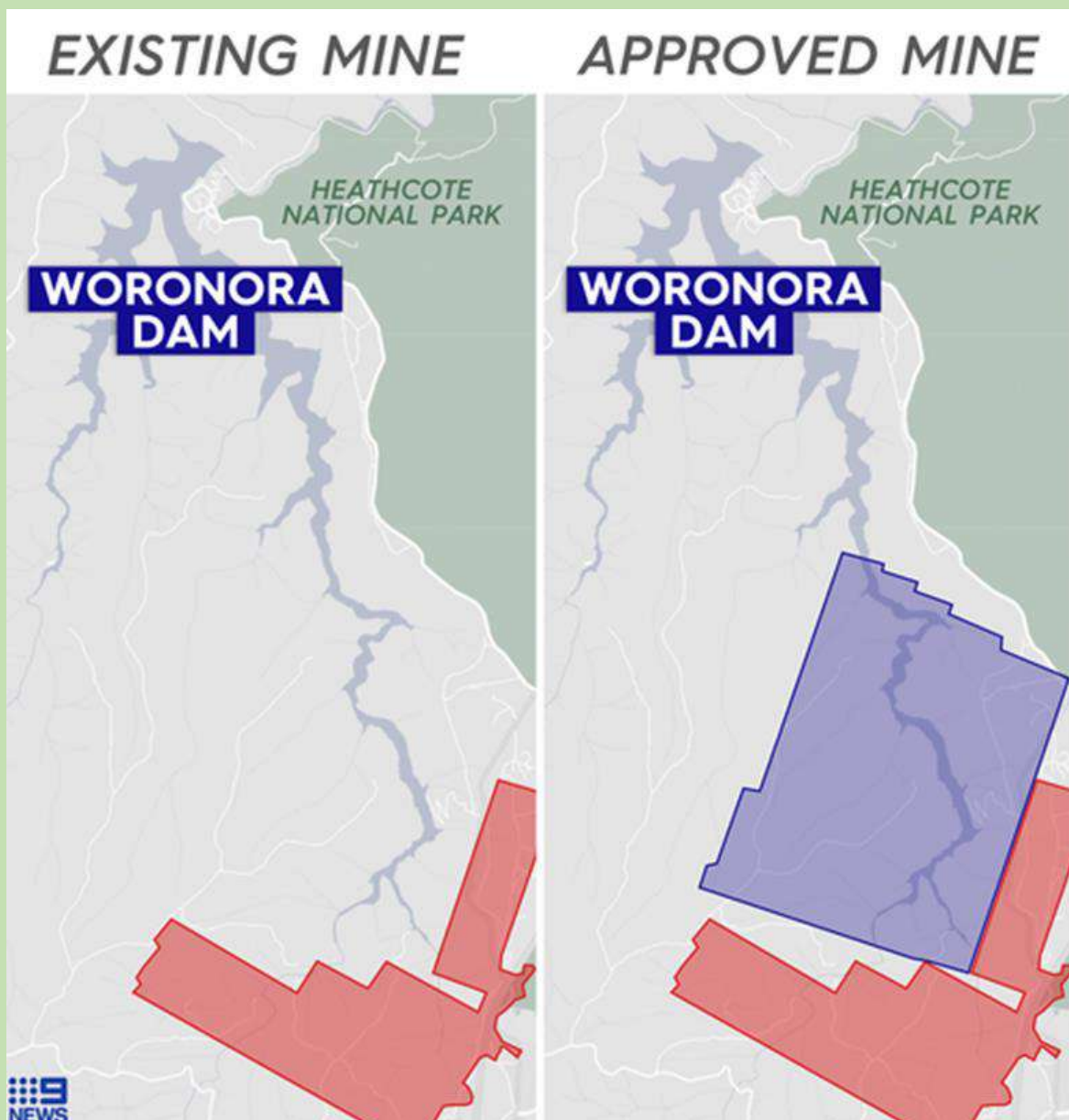


Let's hope we can soon meet in person.....Hopefully by 23rd September when we will be holding our AGM and we will focus on long wall mining and the Woronora Catchment.

Sydney Catchments and Mining Update

On the 25th October 2006 Australian owned Excel Coal Ltd was acquired by Peabody Energy Corp. the largest private-sector coal company in the world. As so often happens one large company owns another which owns another. In this case Peabody Energy owns Peabody Pacific Pty Ltd which in turn owns Helensburgh Coal Pty Ltd (HCPL) which owns and operates The Metropolitan Colliery at Helensburgh. This is the oldest existing continually open coal mine in Australia with beginnings in March 1883 and the first coal being delivered in 1888.

The issue of mining under the catchment at Woronora began 2009 when the Planning Assessment Committee recommended approval of mining west of the Princes Highway across the Waratah Rivulet of the Woronora. The then Minister for Planning Kristina Keneally obliged.



Map showing Metropolitan Colliery area approved for mining. The purple shaded area is the 2009 approved area.

Amongst the conditions of approval were two significant conditions. Firstly for the 'Catchment yield to the Woronora Reservoir', there was to be 'Negligible reduction to the quality or quantity of water resources reaching the Woronora Reservoir' and 'No connective cracking between the surface and the mine'.

Secondly for the Waratah Rivulet between the full supply level of the Woronora Reservoir and the main gate of Longwall 23 (upstream of Pool P), there was to be 'Negligible environmental consequences' (that is, no diversion of flows, no change in the natural drainage behaviour of pools, minimal iron staining, and minimal releases.

The approval allowed Peabody Energy to extend their mining leases westwards under the Woronora catchment and dam.

This precipitated on going community concern and advocacy from groups including Sutherland Shire Environment Centre and NPA.

A significant report was produced in May 2014 by the NSW Chief Scientist Mary O'Kane who wrote a report entitled "On measuring the cumulative impacts of activities which impact ground and surface water in the Sydney Water Catchment" in which it was stated that Sydney was alone among major cities to permit mining under catchments.

Over a time period extending from 2019 to 2020 Southern Sydney NPA local member and executive officer of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, Dr Catherine Reynolds began a petition to stop Mining under Woronora. With the help of many volunteers 10,700 signatures were collected on a hardcopy petition to oppose the plan. This was presented to parliament by the Liberal MP Mr Lee Evans in February 2020.

State Planning Minister Rob Stokes is the minister responsible for this development.

On-going concern from Sutherland Shire Environment Centre led to a November 2019 meeting in Sydney between Sutherland Shire Environment Centre members Catherine Reynolds, Tassia Kolesnikow and Greg with two State Planning executives from the Department on Planning, Mike Young Exec Director Resources Assessment & Planning and Ben Lathwell, Senior Policy Advisor, Minister for Planning & Public Space, (Hon Rob Stokes MP.

During the meeting the 'Compliance Powers' of the Planning Department were discussed and revealing the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) has powers to fine, prosecute, require remediation or halt operations. A decision to HALT operations would be open to Court Appeal however and there is no precedent.

There was recognition of the big issue of 'Whether Mining in Catchment should be Banned' was expressed by Mike Young as the 'Existential Question'.

The Mike Young expressed the position that the DPE "Does not expect there will be reservoir cracking" and that mining under dams has occurred before

A letter from the Planning Department March 16th 2020 told Peabody Energy it could proceed with the extraction of coal from three new longwalls, two of which will go beneath Woronora reservoir

This was in advance of the State Parliament debate which was scheduled for 26th March 2020. Due to the outbreak of coronavirus the NSW state parliament was suspended and the debate never took place.

In March 2020 the Berejiklian government having cancelled the debate, approved the next three longwall panels (LW305-307). Two of these LW306 and 307 will run under the Woronora Reservoir itself, to become the first such approval in two decades.

National Parks Association mining projects science officer Peter Turner has stated the last time one of Sydney's storages was undermined by coal operations was the Cataract reservoir in about 2000.



Existing damage due to Waratah Rivulet where turbid green iron containing river water lined with orange-red bacterially-mediated iron mats (SSES)



Waratah Rivulet showing interrupted water flow and iron staining from previous surface disturbance caused by long wall mining averaging 459m below. (SSES)

The approval prompted strong rejection from notable public figures and politicians, the Sydney County Council and Sutherland Council. The notable public figures included Karen Phelps, former president of the

Australian Medical Association and Member for Wentworth, Clover Moore the current Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney

In her role as City of Sydney councillor, Dr Phelps introduced a motion to the council calling on the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Rob Stokes, to reverse the approval.

Along with the motion Clover Moore sent Mr Stokes a strongly worded internal letter describing the minister's decision as "scandalous".

Sutherland Labour Party councillor Ray Plibersek says the move also led Sutherland Shire Council to pass a similar motion urging the decision be reconsidered.

Sutherland Shire and Wollongong, which both have more than 200,000 residents, share the Woronora special catchment area, the rivers and rivulets passing from one jurisdiction to the next. They share the water within it as the reservoir supplies 100 per cent of the drinking water for some Sutherland shire suburbs, and 30 per cent for Northern Illawarra.

The approval allows Peabody Energy to send long wall mining machines 450 metres below the earth's surface to work coal seams directly below the dam. The long walls extract coal to a height of 3.2m and are 138m wide in the Bulli seam. This is part of the upper Illawarra Coal measures being 255 to 251Ma in age.

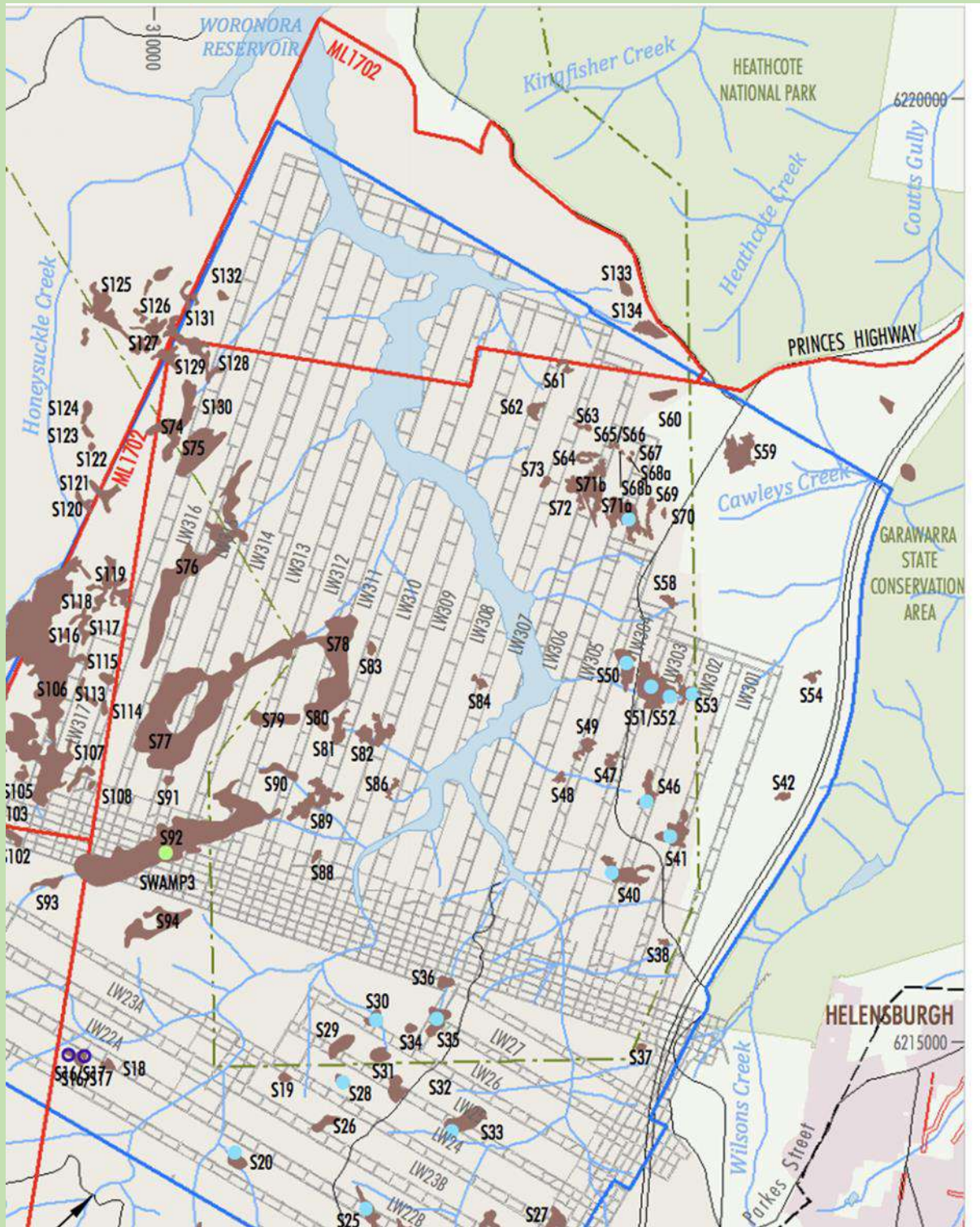
Table 1: Summary of Longwall Dimensions for Longwalls 305-307

Longwall	Longwall Length (m)	Total Void Width (m)	Tailgate Chain Pillar Width (m)
305	1,547	138	45
306	1,907	138	70
307	1,956	138	70

Metropolitan Coal Mine Long walls 305-307 Extraction Plan – Reasons for Approval

The Independent Expert Panel for Mining in the Catchment noted in Part 1 of their two reports that over the last five years, average daily water ingress at Metropolitan Mine has increased from about 0.4 ML/day to about **0.5** ML/day and does not react to rainfall events.

The Metropolitan mine does not have any connective fracture from the coal working to the surface.



Map Showing the Waratah Rivulet and the long wall panels proposed. Source- Independent Panel Report Part 2 Figure 11 Page 46

A Peabody spokeswoman said the approvals would allow the mine "to continue to supply critical steel-making coal to the Port Kembla steelworks and to provide jobs for more than 400 local mining families during these unprecedented times".

About 95 per cent of the mine's 400 employees live in the Illawarra, some of them third and fourth generation miners.

"Ongoing responsible mining at our operation will protect more than 400 local jobs, over \$22 million in royalties injected into New South Wales economy and \$169 million in wages and business spend into the local Illawarra economy," the spokesperson said.

In 2018/2019 financial year the mine actually contributed \$12.5 million in royalties to the NSW economy and injected \$122 million in wages and business to the local economy. The Department of planning estimates about \$122 million in State revenue through royalties over the next 10 years.

The mine provides 415 direct jobs for employees and contractors and work for train crews and Port Kembla Coal terminal where 120 are employed.

An article in the Sydney Morning Herald in February 2020 quoted that amongst Michael West Media's (MWM's) Top 40 Tax Dodgers which did not pay any company taxes in the past five years, was Peabody. This was despite the proponents reporting billions of dollars in earnings to the Australian Tax Office. Peabody made \$16.5 billion in the period.

Support for coal mining is more evident in Wollongong surrounds where coal miners source work from the Appin mine south east of Appin and the Dendrobium mine at Kembla Heights.

Sydney Water outright oppose mining under the catchment and has expressed this opinion as a State utility. In this case it has been overruled by State Planning. State Planning consider the future water loss from subsidence to be far less than the water loss from Sydney Waters transmission of water to the city of Sydney.

The modelling predicts a similar regime of water loss similar to the current loss at the Metropolitan mine. Failure would be represented by catastrophic entry of water into the long wall operation through a connective fracture regime from the surface to the panels.

The decision made by State Planning and Minister Stokes is that the sum of the royalties, employment and participation of a foreign owned private company coupled with the probability of catastrophic failure due to mining is worth risking over the security of an absolutely essential asset, the drinking water of many, which itself provides state revenues through the sale of potable water and would continue to do so without disturbance due to mining.

Ian Hill

Sources

Channel 9 report **'Scandalous': US giant approved to mine beneath Sydney drinking water reservoir 'under cover of coronavirus'**

Sydney Morning Herald **Coal mining allowed under Sydney water reservoir for first time in 20 years**
March 29, 2020

Sydney Morning Herald **New report shames top miners for avoiding company tax** February 2020

Independent Expert Panel for Mining in the Catchment Part 1 12-11-2018 and Part 2 14-10-2019

Metropolitan Coal Mine Long Wall 305-307 Extraction Plan-Reasons for Approval

SOWC Media Release 26-12-2012

The Great West Walk – My Perspective

Roger Lembit

I alighted from the train at Toongabbie Station. My intention was to walk to Parramatta via Girraween and Toongabbie Creeks. My Estonian grandparents had lived at Pendle Hill not far from my intended route. I had completed vegetation surveys in reserves along Toongabbie Creek. My route seemed to make sense, if you like a mix of urban/industrial scenery and remnant bushland.

What I didn't know was that others knew of the value of this area and the broader landscapes of western Sydney. They were plotting a 'Great West' walk between Parramatta and Penrith. Much of my route coincided with part of theirs. A short time after my walk the Great West Walk was made public.

It does not travel through pristine wilderness. It is not restricted to bushland reserves. It is rewarding, even if you take in the industrial waste, the many years of neglect and poor planning. Western Sydney should be proud of it and embrace it.

Anyway, I left the Station and walked west along Portico Parade to reach Girraween Creek. North of the railway line the route follows the western side of the creek, between houses and the riparian vegetation of Swamp Oaks and Cabbage Gums. Crossing Station Road, I stayed on the west side of the Creek to be stranded by two concrete lined channels. Note: head east past the Wentworth Road junction to the broad track along the eastern side of the Creek.

Soon Girraween Creek meets Toongabbie Creek proper which rises in the Hills Shire. At this point there is a reedland supporting a diversity of waterbirds. This section of the Great West Walk has a diversity of native birds.

The walk traverses a wide expanse of grassland with native vegetation fringing the Creek and extending onto the floodplain. The stark Baulkham Hills Substation is passed and the track passes through a number of Parramatta Council reserves.

Heading through Northmead the track passes through areas of maintained and restored bushland, including some impressive ancient Sydney Blue Gum trees. The Creek passes over sandstone cascades, interspersed by weedy sections where one is reminded of the problems of urban development.

The junction with Quarry Branch Creek was passed and the Creek turned south. Navigating the route in this direction is tricky as there is no creekside track for a distance south of Hammers Road. Pop up into suburban streets, then find the track through a small park.

Past Old Windsor Road past planning decisions mean the route passes through industrial land. An area of maintained bushland adjacent to the Coca Cola factory is a welcome respite and features a rest area and a place to regain lost energy.

Across the Creek and skirting Westmead Hospital leads to the Parramatta River junction and the site of Marsdens Mill. A rather large Grey-headed Flying Fox colony exists as you enter

Parramatta Park. The broad expanse of River supports some different bird species before the rapidly expanding business district is met.

The Great West Walk is not wilderness and it shouldn't be judged against other extended walks. It is a chance to experience the bushland remnants west of Parramatta. A chance to understand what we are losing as the urban footprint of Sydney extends inexorably across the Cumberland Plain. It is also an opportunity to embrace western Sydney and understand its flaws and its challenges. Give it a fair go.

Watch out for walks along sections of the Great West Walk on the NPA Walks Program.

Editor: and you can check out more information at <https://greatwestwalk.com.au/>

One of the special spots along this walk is Nurragingy Reserve and a regular visitor is NPA member, Dave Noble. Check out his blog at <http://www.david-noble.net/blog/?p=40916#more-40916>



Azure Kingfisher at Nurragingy Reserve

Photo: Dave Noble

While the Billy Boils

Reading the landscape

You have been walking for some time, blindly confident that the leader knows where he/she is going, following the rules and being visible to the one in front and the one behind. So far, so good. Maybe now it is time to extend those skills a little, become a little more confident, take some responsibility and even be ready to lead.

Most walkers are nervous about their ability to follow a route, worried that they might get lost out there in the wilds, fixated on the forced night out without the comforts of home and worried that they might not ever return to those comforts. There are some easy steps to take to ease those worries.

Often at this time the first concern voiced by the walker is his/her own ability to read a map. I am going to ask you to put that map, that concern, away; at least for the moment. There is something much more important to read. Something that is vital. And that is the land across which you walk. Without the ability to read a landscape the best of maps is but a useless waste of space.

Next walk that you go on, take some time to lift your eyes from your feet and look around. Observe actively. Look at the track junctions, look at the scuff marks on the rocks, count the number of streams that enter on your left, look at the ridges that rise on your right, turn round and look backwards. Do that often. Soon enough you will begin to read the landscape, predict what might be happening and feel what is going on.

Just to illustrate, if you are ever wondering where to go, when heading up -and have you ever wondered why so many walks do end with an uphill walk – you will reduce your chances of getting hopelessly lost merely by following the ridges. Ridges run into each other, heading forever upward, until the peak is reached. Chances are that your ridge, even if the wrong one, will merge along the way to join the one you were looking for. Conversely, if heading down and you are not sure where to go, streams are the way forward. They merge as streams drop away. Mind you, streams are pretty tough going. The vegetation is thicker, the tracks less obvious and the likelihood of waterfalls blocking your way is so much greater. But more of that in a future column!

I often advise my walkers not to be accurate when they navigate. I ask that they make “mistakes”. There are lines in the landscape, many of them. These lines are everywhere. Streams, roads, ridges and power lines are all “lines” and they are recognizable. They are also easier to find than spots. Aiming at a spot and hitting it is hard. Aiming at a line is much easier. If arriving at what was a spot, for example, a car on a road, and the car is not there, in which direction do you turn to find your car? However, if you aim at a line and deliberately plan to make a mistake, for example, to the left of your car, you know that you turn right when you hit the line and hit the car.

So get out, enjoy reading the landscape and then, next time, we shall get out those maps.

Eastern Whipbird
Psophodes olivaceus



You probably know this one more by its call. The Whipbirds' long whip call, one of the most characteristic sounds of the Australian bush, is actually performed as a duet, unless there is a lonely male without a partner who wants everyone to think he is a success in dragging in the women! Then he might answer himself. The male makes the drawn out whip crack and the female usually follows quickly with a sharp "choo-choo". It's fun to be in the bush between a male and a female and get the entire stereophonic effect.

I say know it more by its call than its appearance because it is such a secretive, skulking bird! Rarely does it sit out in the open and often all an observer gets is it disappearing from one thicket to the next. But if you do see it you are looking at a bird that is mostly dark olive-green above, with a long tail, and a grey-white belly. The head and breast are black, with a broad white patch on the side of the face and a black crest. The eye is pale cream and the bill is black. Young whip birds are generally duller, with a smaller crest. The white cheek patch is absent in very young birds, and increases in size as the birds mature.

I won't even attempt to describe how its family placement has changed over the years. If you want to see how it was first thought to be a crow (*Corvus olivaceus*) and then a "coachwhip flycatcher" (*Muscicapa crepitans*) until at last whipbirds and wedgebills were placed in a family with the proposed name *Psophodidae* you can do your own search. Taxonomy is not my strong suit!

Don't believe the books or webpages that also tell you that the eastern whipbird is found in wet temperate forests including both rainforests and wet sclerophyll forests. I often also hear them

in the thick coastal heath in Royal! And, indeed, on one occasion one even opted to visit my urban garden on the edge of Sydney.



Whipbirds are monogamous and how could she stray when the “old man” keeps calling and expecting her to reply. Who needs one of those tracking apps when one is a male Eastern Whipbird!

Breeding occurs from late winter through spring; a loosely built bowl of twigs and sticks lined with softer material such as grasses, located in shrubs or trees less than 3–4 m (9.8–13.1 ft) above the ground. Several broods may be laid in an extended breeding season.

And of course, with all that ground dwelling skulking this is an insectivorous bird!

But I do like an old common name: Stockwhip Bird!

Brian Everingham

Kamay 2020

April 2020

Brian Everingham

34°00'16" South 151°13'04" East

It was at Kamay (Botany Bay) that James Cook first set foot on the Australian continent. His landing was challenged by two men, from the Gweagal clan of the Dharawal nation, standing on the beach.

So begins the exhibition notes on the webpage of the Australian National Museum¹ in his commemoration of the landing of Cook and the crew of the Endeavour at Kamay – Botany Bay on April 29th 1770. That's 250 years ago as of yesterday.

We might not be able to visit the ANM in person at the moment but take your time to visit it online, play the Welcome to Country and be impressed by what's within that exhibition. At least two past members of the RAC, Paul Irish and Shayne Williams, were heavily involved in the exhibition and they have done us proud.

In addition to the ANM exhibition it's worth visiting the webpage in which the story of Cook is told via various perspectives from La Perouse community members.² It's Stories from the Shore – Gujaga Foundation.

I went down today, 30th April, on a very wet day to see just how those additions to the shoreline came out. Remembering how we almost got a hideous statue of a triumphant Cook I had been worried how all this might turn out. I was also concerned about the potential to create more division but when I saw the works in situ those worries fell away and I hope that the La Perouse community is equally happy with the result.



Having noted the lack of reasons about why dogs should be excluded from national parks I was thrilled to see this sign! It was repeated further along the shoreline

¹ <https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/endeavour-voyage/kamay-botany-bay?fbclid=IwAR11jTLXr58XVCB1NMEq-YKpMplqZGkHbp2Bgwe3wrgxJbDFo0xnkZ0KXEQ>

² <https://www.gujaga.org.au/stories?fbclid=IwAR1sOq4q9LNPIy0Gwc-J1TUmHobIEwY5RSfwNbBcKEB53KJgpb9bj2HuGs>



The ribs of the Endeavour (or whale)





Those ribs require close inspection



There were at least six and perhaps eight Pied Oystercatchers along the shoreline today; an excellent reason why dogs should not be allowed into the Park.



The canoes used to fish the Bay by the Gweagal clan

How will the sand be kept to a minimum?



The fire in the canoe



And the fishing gear



The whales





Work proceeds apace on Alpha House



No doubt it was a quiet time at the commemoration. After all it we are still in semi-isolation
But all and sundry involved in this deserve congratulations!!! This has come out well!

Brian Everingham

April 30th 2020

Our Local National Parks during Covid-19

During Covid-19 many popular areas have had to be closed to enforce “physical distancing”. I am hoping this page is redundant by the time it is distributed but at the time of writing the following applies to our Branch area.

That has led to the following decisions by NPWS:

- No camping is permitted in national parks from 26 March 2020, including wild and backcountry camping.
- All NPWS managed cabins, cottages and accommodation are closed to the public.
- Most visitor centres and historic sites are closed (exceptions are in place for permanent residents living within historic sites).
- All playgrounds, barbecue facilities, water drinking fountains, picnic shelters and tables, and rotundas as well as some toilets and viewing platforms are closed.

In our Branch boundary popular areas have also been closed, including:

- Georges River National Park: pedestrian access only
- Kamay Botany Bay National Park: Kurnell Visitor Centre
- Royal National Park: Bonnie Vale beach and picnic area, Garawarra Farm carpark (Figure 8 Pools access), Garie Beach and precinct (with no lifeguard patrols present), Royal National Park Visitor Centre, and Wattamolla beach, carpark, lagoon and picnic area

Where possible, walking tracks and low-traffic open spaces have remained open for the local community to exercise. Members who have been out and about have also noticed many more people than usual are out there walking and, unfortunately, many are walking their dogs. Please note that dogs are not allowed in national parks and the NPWS website explains why this is so!

The sights, sounds and smells of dogs and other domestic pets cause native animals great stress, even causing them to leave their homes and their young unprotected.

Poisonous baits are often laid to control foxes and these can be fatal to dogs

Your dog is at risk of snake bites and tick bites in NSW national parks

If threatened, kangaroos and goannas may defend themselves and cause injury to your dog.³

NPA SSB would add that not everyone loves your dog as much as you do and that leads to user conflict which is not an acceptable outcome for anyone. But surely the most important is the impact dogs have on wildlife!

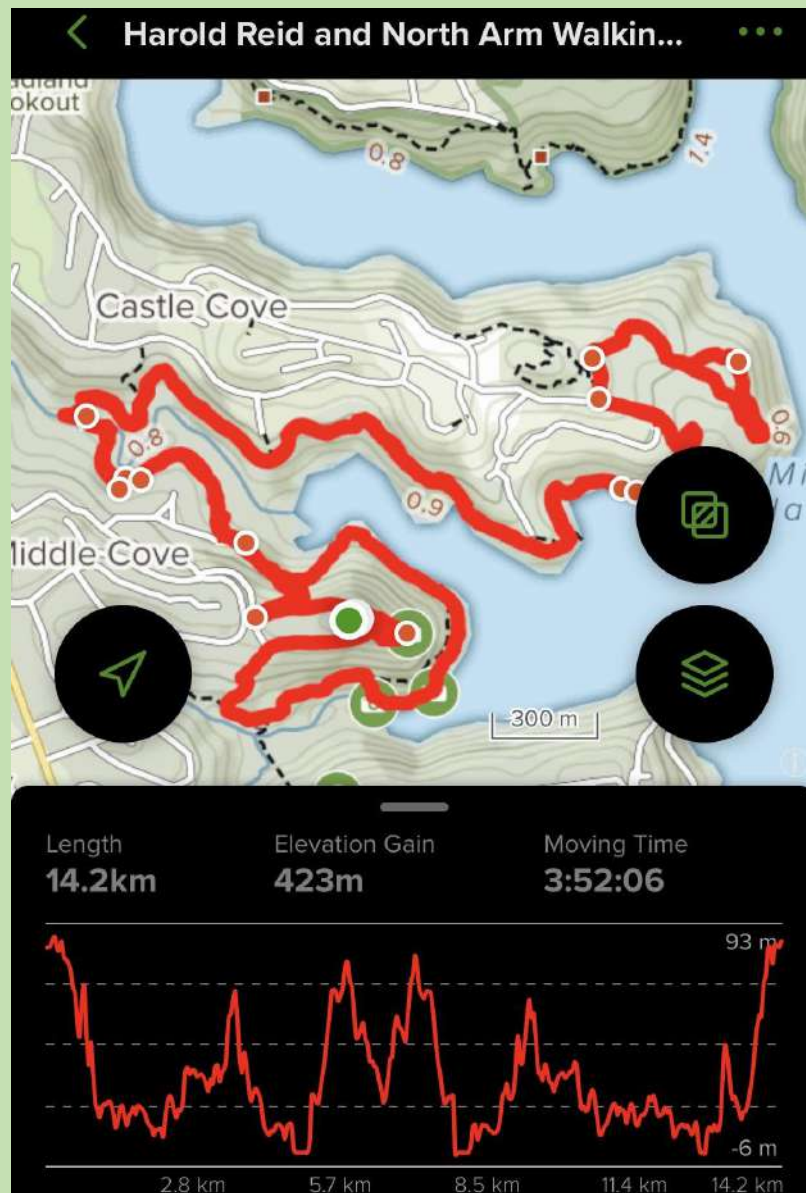
³ <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-and-heritage/care-for-parks/dogs-in-parks#why-can't-i-bring-my-dog-to-other-nsw-national-parks-and-reserves>

WALKING IN A PANDEMIC

A report by Esther Chow and James Moule

At this time of “social distancing” and limited travel, it is a challenge to find somewhere to walk that is safe, legal and interesting. I have exhausted the walks in my neighbourhood. Travelling by public transport is not attractive at the moment so Esther and I have taken the opportunity to find walks that are best accessed by car.

One little gem that we tried last week was a walk around Castle Cove and other bays in Middle Harbour.



We entered Harold Reid Reserve from Rembrandt Drive in Middle Cove, an area that was unfamiliar to me. Local people use the tracks for exercising and walking their dogs but an extended walk results from combining three separate tracks.

Starting from the picnic area on top of “The Sugarloaf”, the track descends to the mangroves on Sugarloaf Bay and winds through stands of Blackbutt, Sydney Red Gum and Grey Gums.

Vegetation varies surprisingly through the walk, several of the small valleys being thick with ferns. There is an “app” that provides a commentary about significant points of the area but the experience is more pleasant without it. There is a sign at the crossing of Scotts Creek proclaiming that Sacred Kingfishers frequent the area but none was evident on the day we visited. Being on the harbour foreshore, it is not surprising that there were wading birds and the bush attracts the usual suspects. Apart from echidnas, larger animals probably do not inhabit the Reserve.



Scotts Creek

There are excellent views of Sugarloaf Bay in the North Arm section of the track.



The final section through land previously controlled by the Commonwealth as an explosives store is the least interesting, though wild flowers can be found there, as for all parts of the track.

For a track in a suburban area, the walk is quite strenuous with several stretches of steps both up and down, giving an elevation of 423m in 14km. The climb back up to the top of The Sugarloaf at the end of the walk was enough to convince us that we had had our dose of exercise for the week.

Willoughby Council has a very useful brochure about the tracks on their website. Go to file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/Document_5412210.pdf