

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

HUT NEWS

October 2021



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Darug and Gundungurra people, and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

Happy 60th anniversary

Welcome to this commemorative edition of Hut News, celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Society. What a joy it is to be able to reflect on the camaraderie and joint efforts of people to experience, be nourished by, and protect the natural wonders of the Blue Mountains. Beginning as the Katoomba and District Fauna and Flora Protection Society in 1961, we have had a few name changes but our efforts to learn about and conserve the plants, animals and ecosystems in which we are privileged to live or visit have remained constant.

This newsletter is only the beginning of our 60th anniversary commemoration and when possible, we hope to have a face to face gathering to celebrate and share stories. The Society is also proud to announce the commencement of an oral

history project to help record the valuable knowledge of the many tireless members who have contributed over the years.

As with everything we do, this edition has been a joint project of love by the many dedicated volunteers who join together and play their part. Thank you to all those who have made this newsletter possible.

It's time now to sit back with a cup of tea, enjoy the recollections and be genuinely inspired by the past efforts, campaigns and nature explorations over the past sixty years!

Yours in nature,
Tara Cameron



Left: Tara as President representing the Society in 2010 at the Delta court case.



Right: Former President Robin Mosman at a rally to stop the filming of the Stealth movie in 2004.

This special edition

To recall all the achievements of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society has been a challenging task and Alan Page, Meredith Brownhill, Lyndal Sullivan, Margaret Baker and Carolyn Williams have met this challenge in the timeline that appears on page 3.

An essential and legal requirement such as governance barely rates a mention. The thousands of formal submissions and letters sent, bush walks arranged and meetings held also get little attention. The Society was also actively involved in national campaigns such as Save The Franklin, Daintree and Myall Lakes, and has participated in Nature Conservation Council initiatives for decades.

This is a moment in our history to pause and reflect on where we've come from. While some people are mentioned, there are hundreds that should be – especially those that served on committees for many years. To those, we say thank you.

There are so many aspects of the Society's achievements that have hardly been touched on and it has been difficult to squeeze it all into 12 pages. Thanks to all for the effort that has gone into gathering memories and spending time to write them all down. So many of these contributions are moving and that from the Garthwins in the box below left says it all.

Susan Crick, Editor

Top right: The nursery has provided plant lovers with opportunities to volunteer for the Society and raise funds. From left, Imre and Joan Gahl, Kevin Bell and David Coleby. Photo taken in 2000.

Bottom right: Some well known Saturday bushwalkers with BMCS. Newnes in the Wolgan Valley. 8th October 2005.

Walkers from left front: Lucy Marks, Heather Hull, June Baxter and rear: Simone Bowskill (only half of her) David Bowskill, Bill Tocher, Ron Wheeler, Elizabeth Stark, Vera Hartley, Ros King.

When we first came to Australia, over forty years ago now, my partner and I quickly discovered that our favourite place to be was walking in the Blue Mountains, especially around Wentworth Falls. After enjoying the National Pass or Wentworth Pass (or sleeping out on the sand bar below Vera Falls) we always looked forward to a cup of tea at the old Conservation Hut as a reward.

It was there we met members of the Society, who were generous in sharing their knowledge of the local bush to these Pommie blow-ins. Their photos, displays, and the show-and-tell table were part of our learning about this precious environment. A rickety chair and a friendly chat over tea helped cement our love of the Blue Mountains.

We moved up here soon after and still credit those oldies of the ConSoc for instilling in us a reverence for this place, which is now so much a part of our lives. We continue to deepen this relationship through learning from fellow Conservation Society members! Thanks.

*Cheers,
Steve and Rosie Garthwin*



Just some of the Society achievements over 60 years

Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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|--------|--|---------|---|
| 1961 | The Katoomba and District Fauna and Flora Protection Society was formed. Frank Walford patron; Fred Astle president. | 1983 | Leura Convention Centre/Fairmont Resort campaign started. The Resort went ahead but with modification of building design. |
| 1963 | Official opening of the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls – a refurbished kiosk. | 1984 | Pillar extraction coal mining stopped at Belltrees (near Bell). |
| 1964 | Name changed to Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society, with the motto “wildlife conservation saves for future generations”. | 1985 | Gracius Broinowski’s painting of a Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo first appears as the Society’s logo. |
| 1960s | Valley of the Waters 530A Committee took an active interest in protecting the environment and the walking tracks, including the Nature Trail. | 1987 | Land acquired using Society funds and added to Water Nymphs Dell Reserve at Wentworth Falls. |
| 1960s | Campaign to prevent limestone mining in the Colong Caves - now protected in Kanangra-Boyd National Park. | 1987 | The Society became an incorporated organisation. |
| 1970 | Newsletter No. 1 published. The October 2021 edition of Hut News is No. 396. | 1988-92 | Campaign against the proposed ‘Crocodile Park’ at Wentworth Falls. |
| 1970 | Allen Strom becomes patron. | 1989 | Friends of the Blue Mountains, the first bushcare group in the upper mountains, was formed by Society members. |
| 1971 | Clutha coal mine in the Blue Mountains stopped. | 1989 | Field work undertaken and submission compiled for Blue Mountains LEP 1991. |
| 1973 | Gas pipeline protest stopped a gas pipeline being built through the Wollangambe Wilderness. | 1989 | World Heritage for the Blue Mountains Campaign started as Geoff Mosley wrote the first submission - which was unsuccessful. The leaflet “Our Precious Heritage” was printed. |
| 1974 | Extensive town plan submission prepared and submitted to Council. | 1990 | The campaign to save Elphinstone/Radiata Plateau from development was launched by Pulpit Hill residents. The Society, and especially Wyn Jones, was involved from the beginning. |
| 1974 | The Save the Boyd Plateau Campaign stopped pine plantations and a paper pulp mill on Boyd Plateau. The plateau was added to Kanangra-Boyd National Park in 1977, and declared a wilderness in 1997. | 1991 | Society nursery at Blackheath opened. |
| 1978 | Land Preservation Committee formed. | 1991 | Campaign to elect environmentally friendly aldermen on the Blue Mountains City Council was successful. |
| 1979 | Propagating and selling native plants went into full swing to provide funds for the Land Preservation Fund. Plants grown at home, especially by Grete Vanry and Jill Dark, were provided for sale. Native plant talks and walks conducted. | 1991 | Campaigned for some years against re-zonings which would have allowed a great loss of bushland. The first Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan provided for more environmental protection. |
| 1981-3 | Bell sand mining opposed. | 1992 | The World Heritage Walk. Wyn Jones inspired walkers and led the walk from Widden (Hunter Valley) through the national park system to Mittagong. |
| 1983 | Name changed to the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society. | | |

- 1993 The new Conservation Hut and John Buki Garden officially opened. A time capsule was placed in the Hut's wall.
- 1993 Environmental reference library was established in Katoomba Library with the Society's \$3,000 donation.
- 1993 Society convenes forum of Bushcare groups and relevant government agencies facilitating the formation of the Bushcare Network.
- 1994 23ha inholding acquired using Society funds and included in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.
- 1996 The Society's newsletter is named Hut News and becomes a monthly publication under its new editor Christine Davies.

Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- 1966 The Lower Blue Mountains Wildlife Conservation Society (LBMCS) was formed. Mr. H.L. (Lindsay) Paish president.
- 1967 First newsletter published known as "Kalori" which means "message stick".
- 1967 Unsuccessful attempt to have the vacant crown land at Yellow Rock declared a Lyrebird Sanctuary.
- 1968 Motto of "Conserve, Preserve, Investigate, Educate".
- 1971 Clutha coal mine in the Blue Mountains stopped.
- 1980s Campaign to protect *Eucalyptus burgessiana* (Faulconbridge Mallee Ash) from housing developments and frequent bushfire hazard reductions on northern side of Faulconbridge and Linden; process ongoing.
- 1982 Darks Common dedicated after years of campaigning to protect the eastern escarpment from housing.
- 1986 Submission to include the headwaters of Linden Creek in the Blue Mountains National Park. Campaign continues today on the now mostly E2 land.
- 1988 Subdivision plans for a housing estate in Faulconbridge Mallee country opposed; in the 1991 final deliberation, house numbers were reduced and Burgessiana Reserve declared.
- 1988-92 Campaign against the proposed 'Crocodile Park' at Wentworth Falls.

- 1991 290ha of unique Castlereagh Woodlands in Londonderry saved from the State government's mega rubbish tip proposal; LBMCS was part of the fighting committee from its inception.
- 1991 Campaign to elect environmentally friendly aldermen on the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) successful.
- 1991 Campaigned for some years against rezonings that would have allowed a great loss of bushland. The first Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan provided for more environmental protection zonings.
- 1992 LBMCS becomes incorporated; supports launch of Blue Mountains for World Heritage campaign.
- 1993 Practical action to assist local campaigns eg restoration of Glenbrook Lagoon and Deanei Forest, Springwood.
- 1993 Supported first threatened species legislation (NSW) and the first Gardens of Stone campaign.
- 1994 Bushfire control policy and hazard reduction practices dominate discussion in the wake of the January Grose Valley fire; first proposal to raise the wall of Warragamba Dam opposed.
- 1995 After many years of campaigning Yellomundee Regional Park was gazetted.
- 1995 Members voted in November to amalgamate with the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

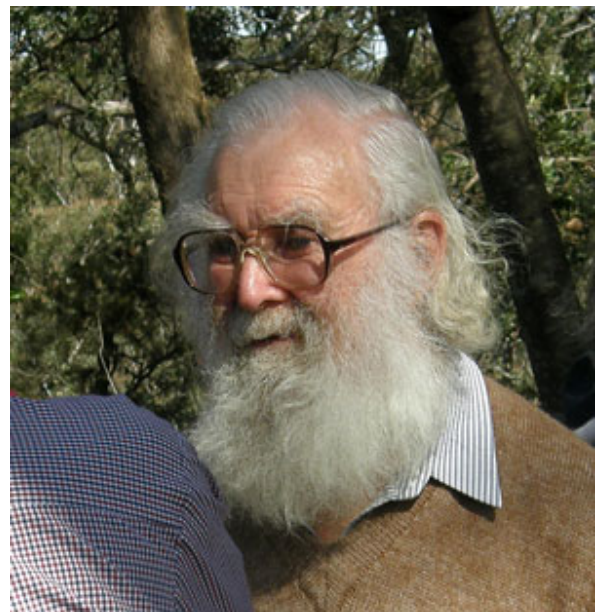
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- 1996 The Lower and Upper Blue Mountains Societies merged.
- 1996 Valley of the Waters bushcare group formed.
- 1996-2005 Major campaign supporting the development of LEP 2005.
- 1996-7 Wollemi Wilderness proposal supported. The Wollemi Wilderness was declared in 1999.
- 1997 Drs Judy and Peter Smith published *Buffer Zones for the Protection of Sensitive Vegetation Units in the City of Blue Mountains*. The study, commissioned by the Society and others, established 60m as the minimum buffer necessary to protect sensitive vegetation communities.

	The findings of the study were adopted by Council.	2007	Blue Mountains swamps are listed under NSW legislation.
1997	Detailed submission to Draft LEP 1997.	2010-2019	Election questionnaires prepared, completed and published in eight elections.
1998-2005	Detailed submission to Commission of Inquiry into Draft LEP 1997	2011	Delta Electricity admits to polluting the Coxs River and agrees to take action.
1998	The Society web site launched.	2011-12	'No Hunting in National Parks' campaign.
1998	<i>Living Near the Bush</i> booklet developed and launched.	2012-15	Coalpac's open-cut mine proposal rejected.
1998	Amendment 25 to LEP 1991 approved giving protection to sensitive lands from subdivision development.	2013-15	Major campaign in support of draft LEP 2013. It became LEP 2015.
1998	Earth sanctuaries proposal for Canyon Colliery. After an intense public campaign the government returned most of the Canyon Colliery site to the Blue Mountains National Park.	2013-20	Supporting the preparation of the Bush Tracker guides for kids.
1999-2008	Representations made to NSW government to incorporate Katoomba Airfield in National Park.	2015	Inaugural 'Mick Dark Talk for the Future' held.
1999	Lithgow silicon smelter opposed. The campaign resulted in strict environmental safeguards being imposed.	2018	Campaign to have the Katoomba Airfield incorporated in the Blue Mountains National Park recommenced.
2000	On 29th November 2000, the World Heritage Committee unanimously agreed to inscribe the Greater Blue Mountains Area on the World Heritage List.	2019	After a thirty year campaign, Radiata Plateau becomes the Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park.
2002	Amendment to NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act to add a category of "Vulnerable Ecological Communities" which subsequently allowed Blue Mountains swamps to be listed.		
2002-07	Campaign to return Canyon Colliery to the national park. Most of the 900 hectares have been returned.		
2004	<i>Stealth</i> movie filming at Mt. Hay found to be unlawful – "declared wilderness areas are sacrosanct".		
2005	Blue Mountains swamps listed under federal legislation (EPBC Act).		
2005	Gardens of Stone Alliance formed to campaign for the protection of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2.		
2005	Plant Study Group started for members to learn about Blue Mountains plants.		

Below: Mick Dark who was president of the Society for nine years and Vice President for eight years. These were at different times in both the Lower and Upper Mountains societies.

Photo: Alan Page



Memories of the Conservation Hut

Meredith Brownhill has been a member since 1985.



Above: The old Hut in about 1980

The founding members brought the Conservation Hut into being and created a home for nature conservation in the Blue Mountains. Our conservation elders maintained the old Hut and reserve, using it for campaign organisation, public nature talks and plant sales for 37 years. The Conservation Hut was the birthplace of conservation in the Blue Mountains and all that it represents and it is a fine achievement.

There are many members who will have nostalgic memories of the old Hut and an era past. Bushwalkers will remember the hot cups of tea for 20 cents each from friendly volunteers after a bush walk. There were petitions to sign on the table with preserved snakes in jars, stuffed birds and rock specimens next to the clip board, and paintings of the Hut by Lloyd Jones were for sale. In winter, on cold nights we sat around the open fire at meetings with shelves of library books nearby. These are my memories from 1985.

The Very Beginnings.

Rest & Be Thankful was inscribed on an early stone building, which in 1905 became the first tea rooms at the Valley of the Waters. Only remnants of brick foundations can be seen today - about 100 metres down the track. In the 1930s a second kiosk was established on the current site which was later owned by Blue Mountains City Council.

(Read more <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/about-us-our-history.shtml>)

Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society formed in 1961 and Mr. Fred Astle was the

first president. Membership quickly rose to 114 by 1962. In 1963 founding members, inspired by John Buki's enthusiastic efforts, leased the derelict kiosk for 'a shilling a year' from Council. Materials were acquired by donation to repair the Hut and members constructed the retaining walls and steps close by. The railway sleepers were purchased for sixpence each.

Some founding members were school teachers who talked about the '*possibility of raising an interest in care for the environment with local school children*'. They found the old kiosk's superb location and public accessibility ideal for nature studies and activities.

On 28th July 1963 an excited crowd of 300 people welcomed the Hon. A.G. Enticknap, Minister for Conservation, who arrived with a motor cycle escort, to open the Conservation Hut. The Hut became famous through the years for the refreshments served on weekends and holidays by member volunteers - especially in winter as the log fire was always burning. There were displays of butterflies, geological specimens, plants and preserved animals to interest children, naturalists and visitors to the area.

Miss Isobel Bowden's vision for the Valley of the Waters inspired members to repair an old overgrown track in the Valley. A prize was awarded to the Society in an Earth Day competition for this self-guided walk. *The Nature Track* booklet is for sale in the Hut today.

Campaigns soon got underway once the Hut was functional. One of the earliest was the protection of Colong Caves. Protection of special areas in the Blue Mountains also became a focus of concern, especially swamps. Winsome Gregory and Graham Alcorn were founders of the Land Preservation Committee (see timeline). Plant sales at the Hut were always social special events and throughout the years many native plants were planted around the Hut and reserves.

The Recent Past

In 1985 the Blue Mountains National Park boundaries were extended from the base of the cliffs up to the top, so the Hut was now in the

National Park and was declared 'not safe'. The last meeting in the Hut was in January 1990 and all display materials, library, furniture etc. were removed. Then it was demolished and 1990 became a year of upheaval for the Society as it had lost its home and base for activities, and connections with bushwalkers and the public.

The Society now entered a time of uncertainty. Society members were deeply disappointed with the plans for the proposed new building as it did not meet the needs of the Society at all. Only a tiny room upstairs was made available – plus an external storeroom. A lease on the building was not an option as managing a large café/restaurant space was beyond volunteers.

We were permitted to hold night time monthly meetings in the main café area and to continue holding plant sales outside. In the interim, meetings were held at the local school and refreshments were sold to bushwalkers from an old van in the Wentworth Falls parking area until it was vandalised.

Members held their own 'Green Opening' with a tree planting in December 1991. The new Conservation Hut had a Society time capsule placed in the building, and was finally opened in 1993. The John Buki Garden that we know today, was dedicated to honour John Buki's enthusiastic efforts in leasing and refurbishing the old 1963 Hut. Mrs. Elizabeth Buki unveiled the memorial.

Members rallied and settled into the new Hut's upstairs office with a desk, telephone, computer and filing cabinet and the store room was quickly filled. The 2001 World Heritage celebration was held in the Hut and meetings and forums continued until 2005, when they were replaced by special guest speaker events at the School of Arts. Committee meetings were held elsewhere, as they are today.

Resilience and determination enabled members to revitalise the Society and so it has become the active and successful community organisation that we are a part of today.

My memories of the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Christine Stickley has been a member since 1977.

"They were great, great days!" I exclaimed as Susan Crick asked me to write my memories of the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society, (LBMCS) during the latter part of the 1970s and 1980s. There was such a sense of community and intensity of effort as we worked on major issues such as the Penrith Lakes Scheme, the Leura Golf Course development, the Franklin River, the Nepean/Hawkesbury catchment, Darks Common, Springwood Deanii Forest, the Faulconbridge Mallee, the eastern escarpment, the lower Mountains Sewage Treatment works, and being part of those early considerations for application for World Heritage status for the Blue Mountains and many more.

When I joined in 1977, Mick Dark was President. Meetings were sometimes held on the verandah at Mick and Jill Dark's home in Glenbrook. One sunny morning we sat in camp chairs, with a pet cockatoo nearby, deciding on the design of the logo appearing on our correspondence, the Eastern Spinebill on a *Lambertia formosa*. Mick and Jill

hosted a number of our society Christmas parties where we might be lucky enough to be entertained by folksinger Garry Tooth. When Besse Bramsen became president, we were holding meetings in the Springwood Pre-school, and then the Teacher's Resource Centre at Glenbrook Infants School. The homes of members such as Wendy and Paul Godfrey, George Threlfo, Besse Bramsen and my husband Ross Bridle and I, became integral in holding working meetings during the day or into the night. Members attended the Tuesday night BMCC Meetings and presented at inquiries into developments at both Blue Mountains and Penrith Councils. The LBMCS continually donated funds to conservation groups around the country needing assistance and sent two members to the annual Nature Conservation Council conferences in Sydney.

Many of us were young, with young children or just starting our families, and working, or studying. Our commitment to the Blue Mountains environment was uppermost, and in those early

days, the environment was not particularly considered during developments. The two local conservation societies provided a vital voice for the environment.

One of our major achievements was to ask for the employment of an Environmental Officer on Blue Mountains City Council. Michael Eades was selected in 1988 to be one of the few people in NSW to hold such a position at that time. What a massive job he had and what a huge contribution he made. He identified environmentally sensitive land in the Blue Mountains, which resulted in Council's Local Environmental Plan 1991. There is a reserve protecting a hanging swamp on a Katoomba Creek tributary in north Katoomba near where Michael lived and it is named after him. Michael was especially concerned about hanging swamps, and his work led to the gazetting of the two forms of Blue Mountains hanging swamps, sedgeland and heath shrub swamps.



Craig Linn handing out brochures on the Nepean/Hawkesbury Catchment at an event held on the banks of the Nepean River called "Weir '83". My poster highlighted the threats to the Nepean River Catchment. Photo by Christine Sticklely.

We held a fund-raising concert featuring pianist Gerald Williams in the Springwood Civic Centre for the Franklin Dam campaign. Over the Christmas holidays, Wendy and Paul Godfrey travelled to the Franklin for those peaceful protests. For our monthly meetings we invited guest speakers and sometimes in the format of a forum, they answered questions from the audience following their presentations. Gerald Williams was one such speaker, who came to tell us of this new "Greens Party", championing the environment in Germany.

Eventually, our monthly Friday business meetings were so long that we decided to hold those separately, as I well remember young Rod Dark writing on the blackboard in the School classroom, "Can we please go HOME!". Not before supper, and Besse Bramsen would always bring along her homemade fruit cake. Our meetings provided our members an opportunity to make presentations, often with slides. For example, Margaret Baker gave a talk on her research into wombat populations. Members' trips interstate, bush walks and camps also provided new slides and stories of someone's adventures to share.

Walks were organised for members and their children in the Blue Mountains and sometimes further afield. Jill Dark was always delighted in discovering and identifying plants on these outings. Jill, Aleen Hanley and Besse Bramsen ran the LBMCS stall at the Ivy Market each month on a Saturday at Springwood Civic Centre, and money raised was passed on through the Society's donations.

For some of us, the constancy of the work involved was like having another full-time job. These were the days without personal computers, the internet, or mobile phones. Meetings needed to be in person. It involved many phone calls, driving to meet others all through the mountains, to each other's houses, reading the local papers carefully and being alert to what was happening around us. When I became newsletter editor in 1978, I picked up a Gestetner printer and some sheets of mismatched and coloured paper on which to produce the monthly newsletters. My typing skills were quickly improved as correcting any mistake was a smelly awkward mess. As time went on, I was able to stay back at night at my Sydney workplace and type the newsletter on an electric typewriter, then photocopy the number of copies required, then collate, fold, and address the newsletters on the late-night train trip home. Our Department secretary was not too happy the next morning finding her typewriter settings changed, although I did carefully leave it as I found it. With no social media, these newsletters were important and reflected the more personal voice of a community that was mostly known to each other.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and tireless work of some of our members and the support of all those in the LBMCS. Many are now members of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, so named when we amalgamated. Thank you to everyone, and those I especially remember,

the late Mick Dark, and Jill Dark, the late Aleen Hanley, the late Besse Bramsen, Wendy and Paul Godfrey, Mark and Margaret Baker, Margaret Esson, Craig Linn, Richard Phillips, George Threlfo, Colin and Roslyn Powell, Kathy and Bob Chapman. Wendy Godfrey was the secretary for many years, and even while she and her husband were studying and raising their boys, she added so much energy and time to the Society. Wendy was a considerable powerhouse of ideas with fearless determination. We were young, energetic and devoted, working with the guidance of our respected elders in the Lower Blue Mountains Society.

Above right: A LBMCS bush walk from The Hut to Wentworth Falls on October 16th 1983. Besse Bramsen described the flowers in bloom on the walk in the newsletter. Jill Dark, George Threlfo, Craig Linn, Andrew and Ross Bridle having lunch on the walk at Lady See Lookout, 'where the boronia was profuse'. Photo by Christine Stickley.

Right: Keith Muir and Joan Domicelj at the World Heritage listing celebration in January, 2001. Meredith Brownhill, with the red badge, to her left Alex Colley and Dot Butler in the front row and Robin Mosman stands against the wall in the background.



More Memories

Beverley Thompson has been a member since 1974 and currently organises the Thursday bush walks.

When I joined the Conservation Society in 1974 we had our own hut rented from Council for a peppercorn rent. General meetings with a guest speaker were held on Thursday nights once a month. This was later changed to Friday nights so that people who worked could attend. The hut had an open fireplace but even with this going it was still freezing on a cold winter night.

After being a member for a short time I was asked to become the Hut Roster Supervisor and I did this for several years. The hut was open on weekends, public holidays, and school holidays. If you did hut duty you were rostered on every two months. There was also a list of reserves who would do hut duty if the rostered person couldn't make it. As well as giving out information we sold tea, coffee, hot chocolate, soft drinks and lollies. There was also a small museum with exhibits such as snakes

in formaldehyde in glass jars. The children loved these.

Wonderful people who did hut duty included Frank and Grete Vanry, Shirley Brown and Deirdre Morton, Elvine and David Thomas and Reg and Dulcie Toseland.

In the 1970s bush walks were held only once per month on a Saturday. In about 1979 monthly Thursday walks were introduced. I looked forward to these very much as many knowledgeable people came along. We all learned a great deal about our local flora from Jill Dark and Robyn Corringham, about birds from Graham and Wilson Alcorn and about marsupials from David Thomas.

These are some of my memories from my early days of Society membership before National Parks and Wildlife Service took over, pulled down our hut and built the new modern one.

Christine Davies has been a member for 31 years and was editor of Hut News for 24 years. She became a life member in 2015.

Over many decades, when you've encountered a Blue Mountains conservationist walking in the bush, you found someone who probably has a special talent or perspective for making the relationship between humans and other species beneficial to both. Some early history centred on the site of the wooden bushwalking kiosk at Valley of the Waters. It became known as the Conservation Hut.

It was here that Isobel Bowden, talented botanist, established the Nature Trail with fastidiously researched interpretation. The garden outside the new Hut was named after society pioneer John Buki. And it was in that Hut in 1998 that the wake of Graham Alcorn, former ranger of the upper mountains bushland and former society president, was held. His poems including "Scribbly Gum Moth" encapsulated mountains wonders. He inspired Carol Proberts who became a leading authority on local birds.

Among Graham's fellow poets/lyricists were Denis Kevans and Sonia Bennett. Denis was the self-styled "Poet Lorikeet", writing dozens of environmental verses. Sonia has been a great champion of the Cumberland Plains woodland and penned the "Wollemi Pine" song, reminding me that among the first to realise the uniqueness of the specimen *Wollemia nobilis*, discovered by Dave Noble, was Wyn Jones. Wyn and long-term campaigner Sue Morrison were leading lights of the 1992 World Heritage Walk from the Goulburn River to Mittagong, an event that assisted the World Heritage campaign.

Jim Smith was walking in the Valley of the Waters one day when he first met Denis Kevans who was singing his lyric "Mosses Gentle Fingers". Jim Smith and Margaret Baker would be mainstays of the Outdoor Guides Advance Certificate course at TAFE and among the most prolific local authors. Great lectures by such researchers have been delivered to BMCS. Andy Macqueen's triumphs especially featured the Grose and the Wollemi, Jim Barrett specialised in the Cox's River catchment and Ian Brown eventually covered everything. Mick Dark was arrested in a campaign to stop an obscure war movie being intrusively filmed in the

Butterbox Ridge area. But it was Robin Mosman who stayed out of the bush long enough to organise the court action and media interviews that forced the ill-starred movie to be filmed in a location outside the Blue Mountains National Park and Grose Wilderness.

The bush is about Bushcare as well as walking and, much as it's a pity to single out one group, the cluster in south-eastern Leura that has included Grete Vandry, David Coleby, Rae Druitt, Imre and Joan Gahl, plus Anna and Brian Marshall has been really inspiring. There were thousands of other conservationists involved and there is more work for thousands to do in the future, as shown in the photo of BMCS members raising umbrellas to shield the environment against bad policies.



Above: BMCS Interpretive Bushwalkers in Warragamba Park, opposite Blue Mountains National Park, pondering the effect of possible dam wall raising on the Warragamba Gorge. Photo by Katriona Herborn.



Above: Plant sales at the Hut in 1998.

Outstanding successes through the Land Use Subcommittee

Lyndal Sullivan, a life member, has been a key part of the Land Use subcommittee and a very active member for nearly forty years. She writes here about her memories of the subcommittee's considerable achievements.

Where else would you get the chance to inspect sewage treatment plants, tramp through the bush along proposed sewer lines, learn about the law in action, meet with government ministers, scientists and legal advisors? These rich and varied experiences have given me opportunities to discover some hidden gems of the Mountains and to work with many wonderful people.

After joining the Society in 1987, I found myself scrambling along creek lines collecting information for the Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society's submission to the draft Local Environment Plan 91 (LEP 91). From 1995 Land Use Subcommittee issues kept me busy (with a few years off), including eight years on the Management Committee as Land Use Officer (2000-2008).

As well as advocating for the rejection or amendments to damaging development proposals, the subcommittee addressed the 'rules' that permitted such environmental damage (in LEPs and state legislation). The newly adopted LEP 91 still had loopholes that allowed subdivision development to trash sensitive land. Community pressure brought about an amendment to close this loophole in spite of active opposition and this required diplomacy and smart strategies.

Meanwhile a ten year review of the remaining, mostly urban areas, commenced culminating in LEP 2005. In 1996, a coalition of nine local groups formed the Blue Mountains Resident Network (BMRN) to address the disappointing Draft LEP 97. Responding to Council and then the Commission of Inquiry in 1998, the Society conducted street stalls and meetings to encourage submissions, gather information and assist understanding of issues. The Society's own 65 page submission resulted from over 500 hours of member effort.

The recommendations in the 1999 Commissioners' report adopted many key BMRN proposals, including a wider application of Environmental Protection zones, more stringent limits on steep slopes, greater prescriptiveness in development consent criteria, and buffers around creek lines and significant vegetation, based on scientifically established minimum widths (study undertaken by Drs Peter and Judy Smith). The Commissioner clearly supported our contention that environmental safeguards were necessary and justified in urban areas, contrary to Council's position.

After more dedicated work by council planners with further community involvement, the 2005 LEP was finally gazetted. This plan changed the culture in Council; we no longer needed to justify why creeks, steep land, swamps and many other environmental constraints should be protected.

Subsequent NSW government directives forced a "one size fits all" framework on all plans across the state. Further community and council action ensured our local environment protections were preserved in the new, but very clumsy LEP 2015.

During this time, it became clear that the Threatened Species Conservation Act did not protect threatened species or communities. A major concern was the lack of protection for Blue Mountains swamps that were home to many listed species. So we embarked on what became an eight year campaign from 1999 for legal protection of Blue Mountains swamps. We advocated for an additional category of "vulnerable ecological communities" (achieved 2002), for listing under the Federal EPBC Act (achieved 2005) and under NSW legislation (achieved 2007).

Ongoing issues include groundwater protection (impacts of tunnels and cemeteries), subdivisions and two unresolved 30 year old issues of Katoomba Airfield and the Flora and Fauna Park. There have been recent successes too, such as Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park (formerly Radiata Plateau).

The Plant Study Group

Meredith Brownhill

Society members with a love of plants and the bush started the Plant Study Group in April 2005. Our nature study activity meets the aspirations of founding members in 1961 who were keen on field study trips. Our first plant walk was along the Nature Trail at the Hut, studying Proteaceae plants.

On local field trips we have discovered plants such as *Sprengelia monticola*, which is now in flower in Den Fenella.



We have ventured on bus trips to places such as the Boyd Plateau, contemplating the campaigns of early members as we travelled along the dusty track. After an intense campaign by Society members against pine plantations and pulp mills, the Boyd Plateau was added to Kanangra-Boyd National Park in 1977. So on arrival at the Boyd campsite in November 2020 we were delighted to find a magnificent flowering of plants after the catastrophic bushfires of 2019/2020.

Our membership has grown and so has our group knowledge of botany. Our outings are most often serendipitous strolls where we examine whatever plants we encounter. But sometimes our activities have a particular focus such as when we give assistance to bushcare groups in the identification of plants on their site or help in the annual survey of a local population of the endangered *Leucopogon fletcheri*. You can find us here:

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/psg/index.shtml>)

Left: The Plant Study group in April 2021. Photo by Helen Yoxall.

About us

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) is an incorporated voluntary group of more than 900 members helping to conserve the World Heritage Blue Mountains region. The Katoomba and District Fauna and Flora Protection Society was founded in 1961 and was later amalgamated with the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society to become the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

We are governed by a management committee and much of our conservation work is undertaken by sub-committees and campaigns. We also have a native plant nursery, several bushwalking groups and a Bushcare group.

Contact us

- Call the Membership Secretary, Ross Coster on 0418 462576
- By mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782
- By phone at 02 4757 1872 (leave a message)
- By emailing bmcs@bluemountains.org.au

Visit us

www.bluemountains.org.au.

Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Twitter: bmcnsnw

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/blue_mts_conservation_society/

Become a member

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Emailing Ross at

membership@bluemountains.org.au

- <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/joining.shtml> or scan this with your mobile:

