

# HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



## The Kedumba Valley

At our general meeting on Friday 27 November, Jim Smith will talk about the "Changing History and Environment of Kedumba Valley".

Jim will tell us about the original inhabitants, the Gundungurras, the Maxwell family who occupied the valley farm from the 1860s until very recently, and other families who tried to eke out a living in the valley.

The meeting starts at 7.30, at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls.

## Learning About Reptiles

Did you know? ... that some snakes lay eggs and others have live young; that Diamond Pythons keep their eggs warm by curling around them and shivering to generate warmth, and that no other snake does this?

13 kids and 9 adults at a recent Kids' Club activity learned fascinating facts about reptiles and frogs, touched a carpet python, saw snakes eat mice, and fed grasshoppers to tree frogs.

## ... and Native Seeds

On Saturday 7 November, the Kids' Club will learn about, and collect and plant, native seeds. Details are on page 4.

## Going to Dizzy Heights

Part of our plan for Digger Cooper Reserve is a rest stop with a viewing platform. In August we hired a cherry picker to see how high we need to go to clear the trees for a 360° view. All in attendance took a ride to 12 metres and gazed in awe at the brilliant view.

Plans for the rest stop, as well as a photographic panorama taken from the cherry picker, can be seen at the general meeting or on the first Sunday morning of every month at our bushcare group. (Next work days: Nov 1, Dec 6.)

## Broom Busting Time

We all need to be broom busting during October and November!

Broom, a noxious weed, is flowering now. It has bright yellow pea flowers which develop into flat dark pods which explode open, spreading 100s-1000s of seeds up to four metres from the parent plant. It alters bushland habitats.

THE DEADLINE  
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS  
WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER

## New Plans for Echo Point

Currently on exhibition at BMCC is the Draft Plan of Management for the proposed Echo Point Crown Reserve. The plan proposes to create a new blueprint for the site with a vision to provide a dramatic and enriching introduction into the Blue Mountains.

The obvious negative environmental impacts on the area have been assessed by the consultants Manidas Roberts as weed invasion, littering and reduced water quality. To counter these impacts and improve the general quality of the site, the consultants have proposed bush re-vegetation and regeneration, a weed management program, upgrading of walking tracks, terracing in Lilianfels Park to control erosion and the installation of recycling bins.

While proposing many positive and welcome actions there are some significant changes that may compromise the environment, in particular development of the Visitors Information Centre and car parking areas in Cliff Drive.

The Katoomba Echo Point Planning Advisory Committee, including a Society representative, agreed unanimously to recommend reduced car parking at Echo Point and the removal and relocation of the Visitors Information Centre to a site that would encourage tourists into the town centre and reduce negative impacts on the environment. The committee voted to accept in principal, with a few recommendations, the draft plan presented to them by the consultants.

A week later when the plans went to council some dramatic changes had been made to the existing Visitors Information Centre including the adding of a large cafe and extensive decking along the South escarpment. Also, rather than reducing parking in the area, spaces that were lost in the revegetation of the lower car park were proposed to be made up on the eastern end of the Cliff Drive car park.

This area, labelled as the road reserve, is in fact a steep, wooded embankment which runs down to Prince Henry Cliff Walk. The plan proposes to build an infrastructure to accommodate over twenty cars over this embankment. A significant section of Echo Park is also proposed to be turned into car parking.

The plan is on view till mid November and submissions are being taken. The Society advises members to view the plans and respond to the council.

Small broom can be pulled out by hand. Larger broom should be cut as close to the ground as possible and applied with Roundup within 30 seconds

of cutting. (For more information see the "Weed of the Month" leaflet, available from Council.)

Join us for a broom busting morning in Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls, on Sunday 8 November (details on page 4).

## Environmental Flows

Sydney Water is undertaking steps to clean up our streams with upgrades of sewerage systems at Medlow Bath, Blackheath and Mt Vic, to keep up with latest technologies and to allow for connection of additional properties so far unconnected.

At this stage, EPA approval is still being sought. The Society has responded to Draft 2 EIS and will examine the final EIS, expected to be on display Dec-Feb, and make a submission. Feedback from members would be appreciated.

In a separate project, Sydney Water is applying to EPA for licensing of sewerage overflows. Guidelines will be set following feedback on EIS displays and testing at various systems. Abatement of sewerage overflows will reduce amount of untreated sewage entering waterways.

Residents can contact Sydney Water on (freecall) 1800 659 809 with comments and questions, or alternatively BMCS who has a representative on the community working group for the Upper Blue Mountains Sewerage Scheme.

"Hut News", the newsletter of Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

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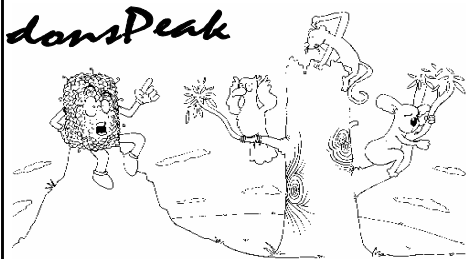
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## donPeak



### Greening the 'Barbarians'

'Barbarians' is the ironic term journalist Paul Sheehan uses to describe ordinary Australians, as he believes that certain others see us. In 'Among the Barbarians' (1998), Sheehan shows a deep feeling for the Australian environment and a profound respect for Aboriginal culture.

Its poignant quotes include:

'I prefer to be alone and I believe a white man can be more alone in the Blue Mountains than almost anywhere because we Europeans don't yet have eucalypt dreaming' (David Foster, Bundanoon-based winner of the 1997 Miles Franklin award)

'In 1911 .. Griffith Taylor .. predicted that by the year 2000, Australia might support a population of 19 million .. the prediction ruined his career. It was viewed as preposterous .. in a country that most ... believed would become a second America' (Paul Sheehan)

'... core Australian values include a fair go for all, free speech, real environmental consciousness and maintaining the fight against corruption' (Ted Seng, Deputy Mayor of Randwick)

'It (a new Law of the Sea treaty) demands that ... the living resources in it are not destroyed, depleted or irreparably harmed' (Senator Peter Cook, former Australian Labor Party Minister)

Sheehan argues plausibly that our government's sovereignty over Australia, part of Antarctica and wide areas of ocean make us an 'ecological superpower'. He calls for a global environmental organisation with an Australian headquarters to be established.

On the debit side, Sheehan assumes that all environmentalists are against immigration — he needs to meet those who think an infusion of certain people and values from overseas could actually help our environment, particularly if it teaches us more responsible patterns of resource consumption.

And he takes too much space discussing transitory multi-cultural conflicts and not enough fleshing out his challenging and interesting ideas on a green Australian future. He should also have identified uranium and greenhouse emissions as major issues, but, on balance, 'Among the Barbarians' is worth reading now and will be many years in the future.

—Don Morison.

## Protecting Katoomba Creek

Two parcels of land located adjacent to the Minnehaha Reserve in North Katoomba are the subject of some controversy in Council. Together with the adjacent Crown Lands and National Park, these bushland areas currently play an important role in protecting Katoomba Creek and subsequently the Grose River Valley. One is located north of Davidson Road in North Leura and the other north of Wattle Tree Road, North Katoomba.

Local Environment Study 1997 found that these areas are outside the Sustainable Development Threshold, they have environmental significance and are unsuitable for development. However the property section of Council and some Councillors appear to have other plans, i.e. to "develop".

Three groups (Minnehaha Land Care, Lindeman Road Bushcare and North Katoomba Bushcare Groups) have joined forces to gain community support for the proposal to protect the area. The Conservation Society's management committee is also supporting the campaign. However, the support of individual members will make the difference. Please help by writing your own letter, signing the enclosed form letter or a petition. (See the enclosed leaflet for details.)

A walk through the area is planned for Saturday 28 November. Please join us. Contact Lyndal Sullivan 4782.1635 for details.

## Council Watch

The Draft Tree Preservation Order that has consumed an excessive number of hours of our time over the past 5 years has again been deferred. This time Clr Harris, seconded by Clr Hamilton wanted more consultation with plant experts because they did not like the list of plants exempt from protection and wanted the final draft to wait for the BMCC Tree Management Policy.

The vote went 10 to 2 for the delay with only Clrs Henson and Gaul wanting the TPO to be made.

The discussion against the TPO centred around the "dangers" that trees pose. Clr Williams has a problem with "rotten, borer-infested trees" — not surprising, when he has buried all his under-storey vegetation and tree trunks beneath 2 meters of landfill. (A bit more understorey vegetation Clr Williams, and you would have a healthier ecosystem with more birds to pick off the grubs that attack your trees.) Mr. Hollingdale of the Megalong Valley Landholders Association, argues that trees "cause soil erosion".

Somehow, twisted logic won the night and it is back to the drawing board with the draft TPO. If you should bump into any of your councillors do try and persuade them the logic of protecting the few remaining bits of remnant bushland in private hands — we won't know what we've lost 'til it's gone, somebody once sang. — Philippa Fincher.

## Environmental Awards

BMCS was involved in judging local schools in this year's Mayoral environmental awards. The winners were: National Parks & Wildlife Service Backyard Bushcare Award, Katoomba High School; Blue Mountains Catchment Management Committee Newstart Award, Ellison Public School; Sydney Water Waterwise Award, Winnmalee Public School; Integral Energy Conservation Award, Mount Riverview Public School; Blue Mountains City Council Waste Management Award, Mount Riverview Public School.

There was a tie for the Mayoral Environmental Award 1998 — Mount Riverview and Ellison Public Schools.

Winners also received some native plants from the Society's nursery.

It was inspiring to see such enthusiasm and dedication from students of all schools involved.

## Plants of the Month

### Native Mints (*Prostanthera* species)

These are really easy to grow. I have several species in my garden, all bought as tube stock at the Conservation Society's nursery. They flower in profusion in various shades of mauve, pink and purple, and attract a variety of pollinators, including lots of butterflies. Even when not flowering, the perfumed leaves are lovely — plant them next to a pathway so that people brush against them.

Because they grow so quickly and easily, they probably don't live forever. Plant another one every year — in my book, there is no such thing as too many native mints in a garden — and cut them back after flowering, by about a third, so they don't get "leggy". —Christine Davies.

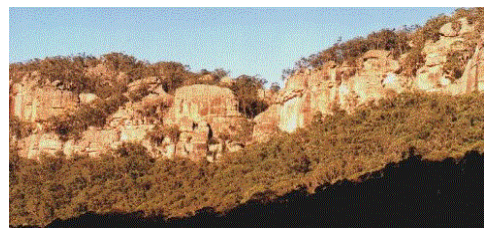
## Excursion to "300 Sisters"

A beautiful day and a growing awareness of this unique and beautiful area near Capertee brought out a large group of people who wanted to visit or revisit Airly and Genowlan.

While some went to explore the historic ruins left behind by the early shale miners, "like a step back in time", others took the more energetic option and climbed to the top of Mount Airly to see the wonderful pagoda formations.

"The Capertee Valley blazed with sun and greenery". There were "wildflowers, birds and stunning scenery", "marvellous rock formations and lovely bird song". One walker saw "a lilac coloured orchid I have never seen before".

"We cannot lose this idyllic spot."



The splendour of the late afternoon sun reflecting on to the golden pagodas of Mount Genowlan is a sight never to be forgotten. It is well worth an overnight visit.

## Membership Enquiries

Contact Ross Coster

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## Looking Back .....

(From Newsletter No. 3, December 1970: "Walkabout with Graham")

### Nesting Time

Spring and early summer is an interesting time for bird lovers — nesting time. Not all birds nest in the spring. Lyre birds nest in the winter; yellow winged honey-eaters nest any time when conditions suit them, Red browed finches often nest again in the autumn. In the dry inland many species nest again after the rain.

But here in the mountains, **now** is the time to see mating flights and displays; to hear the most melodious bird songs and to find cunningly hidden and beautifully constructed nests.

The most interesting nest found by the writer is in a Scribbly Gum at Minna-Ha-Ha Falls Picnic area. Built in the fork of an upright dead branch, the outside of the nest is covered with flakes of bark, so cunningly placed, that the nest appears to be part of the tree. The builder is the orange winged Sitella.

Unlike the Tree Creeper, which hops **up** the tree trunks seeking insects, the Sitella starts at the top and hops **down**.

The perfect camouflage of the nest is somewhat contradicted by the behaviour of the birds.

The noted ornithologist Keith Hindwood reports that up to a number of **eight** have been seen attending **one** nest and feeding the young. Three birds attending ours, calling constantly "chur-dit, chur-dit". By watching them, we found the nest.

When, however we scrambled with some difficulty to the lower branches of the tree and with the aid of a mirror tied to a pole, examined the inside of the nest, a possibly explanation arose. The nest was lined with grey-green lichen and contained young birds covered with pale grey down!

Now, Robins — yellow, rose and scarlet — use lichen to camouflage the outside of their nests. Sitellas, it seems, use it to camouflage the inside.

To any predator looking down, the grey-green lining and downy grey young would blend with the dead branch and the white bark of the Scribbly Gum!

In one case, reported by Keith Hindwood, two Sitellas laid in the same nest and sat side by side until the eggs hatched!! — *Graham Alcorn*.

## Welcome to New Members

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Jenny, Rebecca, Brook and Nathan Power, St Clair  
PK Tanner, Springwood  
Mona Ross, Blackheath  
S Beresford, Wentworth Falls  
Kate and Bill Girdwood, Harbord  
Leah Morgan, Springwood  
J Payget and L Strathdee, Lawson  
John and Patricia Watson, Leura  
Helen Frith, Katoomba  
Jan Cave, Hazelbrook  
Aleathea Joan Cooper, Katoomba  
Peter and Wendy Trankels, Leura  
Jane Young, Katoomba

## About October 1998

Hasn't October 1998 been a strange month? In between bouts of 'flu and asthma, heat waves, and gale-force winds which carried a bite from the Antarctic, there have been days to sit in the garden and enjoy the spring flowers and the numerous butterflies and swarms of native bees (much smaller than the introduced bees, and without a sting). They particularly like the native mints and Eriostemons.

Has anybody ever seen so many native bees? These have slender striped bodies. Why are there so many around this year?

Growing in profusion at Mount Blackheath was an Eriostemon with mauve petals, very lovely and covered with orange butterflies.

At Mount Annan (14 degrees above normal!!) the beds of Western Australian paper daisies were spectacular.

Just a day later (a cool day with gentle rain) at Mount Tomah, Rachel Makinson and I heard a bird with a soft, pretty song, and several times a soft imitation of the call of the whip birds. I wonder if it was the same bird? — *Christine Davies*.

## In the Bush

A twelve degree maximum (the first double figure reading for Katoomba in about three weeks), a lightly trodden path, a good walking companion and a hysterically marvellous view at the destination. As an old folk song says "What more diversion can a man desire", assuming of course he lives in the upper Blue Mountains.

Such were my thoughts as we wandered out to Ikara Head. The Grose River takes a tight turn to the east below it. The massive cliffs opposite are slashed by the deep cuts of Koombanda Creek and Jungaburra Creek. A short way up the former may be seen the workings of the now deserted Canyon Colliery. The hinterland of both creeks rise up in a massive slope to the skyline along which runs the Bells Line of Road. That is the one blemish in the feelings of utter wilderness that the area conveys. From that skyline comes the muffled sounds of the occasional heavy trucks and motor bikes but as they say "there are snags even in Heaven".

The walk commences 3.5 kms in from the Victoria Falls access road. It could be done in half a day but a full day would give one a chance to botanise, admire the numerous rock forms along the ridge and argue the identify of the various prominent features as well as relax on the rock platform at the end of the walk.

My observations were made in early

## Time Line

Here the wind and magma  
uttered  
passionate dreams  
on rock  
striations  
chiselled by icy fingers  
are legends of glaciers.

Here the moody waters  
scorn encirclement  
leaping and tumbling  
from high places  
to fret and gnaw  
the valley's rocky lap  
singing river stones  
songs of elemental battles  
yearnings  
for oceans and endless skies ...

Culled only by time  
here the trees grow old  
through days and nights  
of deep green silence  
with birds  
with smaller moving things  
the mountains —  
sharing a dream.

(Maureen Maguire).

August. *Acacia terminalis* lived up to its common name Sunshine Wattle. It positively glows among the dappled shadows of the understory. *Leucopogon microphyllus* and *L. setiger* were common even in the harshest locations (*Leucopogon*=white bearded and refers to the corolla lobes; "Gr.pogon=beard; phyllus, many flowers in one calyx, setiger=bristle bearing.) Many waratahs were seen with promising buds.

The names on the map I find intriguing. Again I give high praise to Andy Macqueen's book "Back from the Brink". He lists the origins of many of them. Some are attributed to Myles Dunphy who submitted them to the National Parks Place Names Committee.

Ikara means throwing stick or woomera. A friend drew my attention to the long thin contours with a little notch at one end. We do not know if Dunphy named it because of that. Koombandah Creek = sleep, Jungaburra Creek = spirit place.

Melodious and evocative as these and many others are I find it disappointing to learn they have no link with the Aboriginal inhabitants. Their language had died out long before the area was mapped.

— *The Bunyip*.

## "The Coming Anarchy"

In a long article called The Coming Anarchy which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly in 1994, recently on the Internet, Robert Kaplan paints a grim picture of a world gripped by overpopulation, environmental destruction, disease, tribalism and anarchy. More particularly he tells us that in the West African territories of Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast and Ghana, most of the primary rain forest as well as the secondary bush is being destroyed at an alarming rate. Take this hard data: when Sierra Leone achieved independence in 1961 as much as 60% of the country was primary rain forest, now 6% is; in the Ivory Coast the proportion has fallen from 38% to 8%. This trend is general in most African states with a concomitant increase in soil erosion, flooding and malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

In Conakry, capital of Guinea, Kaplan saw streets that were a long puddle of floating garbage, mosquitoes and flies everywhere, and children, many with protruding bellies, as numerous as ants. If the population continues to grow at current rates, the population of Guinea will double in 28 years, meantime hardwood logging continues at madcap speed. This leads him to reflect: 'It seemed to me that here as elsewhere in Africa and the Third World man is challenging nature far beyond its limits, and nature is beginning to take its revenge.

Yet, he tells us, mention 'the environment' or 'diminishing natural resources' in foreign-policy circles and you meet a brick-wall of scepticism or boredom. While surging populations, deforestation, soil erosion, air pollution may have only a gradual political and strategic impact, there will be something more dangerous and dramatic if rising seas begin to inundate overcrowded regions like the Nile Delta and Bangladesh.

Did I say 'overcrowded'? In the next 50 years the earth's population of 5.5 billion will almost double with 95% of the increase in the poorest regions. Kaplan quotes this relevant piece by a Canadian environmentalist he greatly admires: 'The worst degradation is generally where the population is highest. The population is generally highest where the soil is best. So we are degrading the earth's best soil.

In the Blue Mountains we are not troubled by good soil. Instead we could be troubled by good scenery which visitors come here in increasing numbers to see. This creates a responsibility on us all to conserve the natural qualities that they come to admire. — Jim Warburton.

## Nurturing Noxious Weeds

It is surprising how many people carefully mow around broom bushes, leaving them to flower — and seed — in golden splendour.

If your neighbours are among these people, give them a "Weed of the Month" leaflet or drop one into their letterbox. (Leaflets are available from Council.)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
NOVEMBER						1 Bushcare 1 Bushwalk
2 LeisWalk					7 KidsClub	8 Bushwalk 8BroomBust
9 LeisWalk					14 Bushwalk	
16 Bushcare 16 LeisWalk					21 MC Meet	22 Bushwalk
23 LeisWalk		25 Bushwalk		27 GenMeet	28 Bushwalk	29 Bushcare
30 LeisWalk						
DECEMBER					5 Bushwalk	6 Bushcare 6 KidsClub
7 LeisWalk	8 Nursery	9 Bushwalk			12 Bushwalk	
14 Bushcare 14 LeisWalk		16 Bushwalk			19 Megalong Party	

### NOVEMBER

- 21 (Sat) **Committee Meeting**, 9 am, Mid Mountains Community Centre  
27 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut**. 7.30 pm. Jim Smith (see page 1).

### DECEMBER

- 08 (Tue) **Native Plant Nursery, Christmas Party.**  
19 (Sat) **Bushcare Network/BMCS Christmas Party** at Megalong Reserve.

### CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES (Parents are welcome to come along.)

#### NOVEMBER

- 07 (Sat) **Learning about Native Seeds.** Meet 10 am, Wentworth Falls Lake picnic area, near the barbeque. We will collect and plant seeds for the Society's nursery and our homes. (See page 1). ☎ Jessica 4757.2783.

#### DECEMBER

- 06 (Sun) **Discovering Insects.** (More next newsletter, but keep this date free.)

**BUSHCARE** (Tools provided — bring morning tea and gloves. Contact Blue Mountains City Council to find out about other bushcare groups in your area.)

#### NOVEMBER

- 01 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Reserve. Contact Ross Coster 4759.1247.  
08 (Sat) **Broom Busting** in the Valley of the Waters. 9 am, end of Victoria Street (behind the petrol station). Contact Jessica 4757.2783.  
16 (Mon) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group.** Meet 9 am at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jessica 4757.2783. (If wet, come on the following Monday.)

#### DECEMBER

- 06 (Sun) **Digger Cooper Reserve Bushcare Group** (details as above).  
14 (Mon) **Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group** (details as above).

### BUSHWALKS (Usually day walks — bring lunch and minimum 1 litre water)

Walks have been graded: 1-3 easy; 4-7 medium; 8-10 hard. If coming by train or in need of transport, contact the leader. If you would like to lead a walk or organise an excursion, contact the Bushwalks Co-ordinator, Jim Wallace 4784.3305.

#### NOVEMBER

- 01 (Sun) **The Hanging Garden.** Meet Wentworth Falls Station carpark (near clock) at 9.30 am. Contact Christine Davies 47 877 246. Grade M5.  
08 (Sun) **The Wonderland Track and Three Brothers.** Meet 9.30 Medlow Bath Station (south side). Contact June Baxter 4787.7312. Grade M5.  
14 (Sat) **Fortress Ridge.** Meet 9.30 am, Leura Public School (cnr. GW Hwy and Mount Hay Road). Contact Joan Gahl 4784.3286. Grade M.  
22 (Sun) **Woodford Weir/Paradise Pool.** Meet 9.30 am Woodford Station carpark (south side) at 9.30 am. Contact Liz Stark 4754.4966. Grade M.  
25 (Wed) **Terrace Falls Reserve.** Meet 9.30 at War Memorial, Honour Avenue, Lawson. Grade M5. Contact Jim Warburton 4759.1312.  
28 (Sat) **Katoomba Creek's Escarpments and Swamps.** Meet 9.30 Katoomba Station (near Gearin's Hotel). Contact Lyndal Sullivan 4782.1635. (M5)

#### DECEMBER

- 05 (Sat) **Glenbrook Gorge — Rock Hop.** Meet 9.30 NPWS entrance. Contact Jacqueline Reid 4739.8485. Grade M7. (Bring spare shoes.)  
12 (Sat) **A special walk in the Kanimbla Valley.** (More next month)  
16 (Wed) (Does anybody want to lead a walk on this day? — Contact Jim Wallace.)

### LEISURE WALKS (Usually morning walks — bring a drink and morning tea.)

#### NOVEMBER

- 02 (Mon) **Valhalla Head.** Meet 8.30 Blackheath Neigh.Centre. Contact Gillian Janus 4787.6181. (BYO BBQ afterwards).  
09 (Mon) **Grose Valley Views.** Meet 8.30, Leura School, Cnr. Mt Hay Rd and GW Hwy. Contact Jan Cutler 4784.3079.  
16 (Mon) **Lockleys Pylon.** Meet 8.30, Leura School (as for previous walk). Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.  
23 (Mon) **Dargan's Creek.** Meet 8.30, Mount Victoria Station, Contact Rosemary Butler (02) 6355.2292.  
30 (Mon) **Wall's Ledge.** Meet 8.30, Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre, Contact Norah Gaynor 4787.6071.

#### DECEMBER

- 07 (Mon) **Overcliff/Undercliff Walk.** Meet 8.30 Wentworth Falls Station Stockyard carpark. Contact Kees Putting 4759.1958.  
14 (Mon) **Leisure Walkers Christmas Party.**