

NOTICE OF MEETING

FRIDAY AUGUST 9TH 7.30PM ROBERTSON COMMUNITY CENTRE
IDEAS FORUM, ROBERTSON VILLAGE PLAN

This is an opportunity for members of REPS to discuss specific ideas that could be considered by the Consultant Town Planner. Ideas on key issues need to be presented to Susan Stannard so she can consider all options in her preparation of a preliminary village plan for public comment.

* You may be aware of a **specific need** (eg a picnic area for tourists) which could be met in one of several ways - or

* You might be aware of a **specific site** (eg an unused road) which could be used for a bicycle track - or

* You might feel strongly about a **specific issue** (eg village footpaths or drains) which could be handled differently

After we have exchanged ideas and clarified our thoughts, the next step would be for members to write to Susan Stannard ("Honeywood", Belmore Falls Road, Robertson) to let her know your thoughts on specific issues that only residents of Robertson can provide. We will list specific needs, specific sites, and specific issues, formulate ideas and identify who among us would like to follow up these ideas (by way of correspondence) with Susan. Photographs and maps will be available.

Remember your view counts!

For further information contact Helen Tranter 851695, Robyn Williams 851473 or Larry Whipper 851394. All are welcome and supper is served.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Robyn Williams article in the last "Eucryphia" highlighted the different approaches and techniques currently being used in stormwater management. During a recent visit to Albury I came across a display by the Bungambrawatha Creek Care Group, who are trying to prevent what is left of their local urban creek being turned into a concrete drain. (Their long term aim is to have parts of the existing drain removed.

The group is receiving considerable support from The Department of Land and Water Conservation, and it is a statement from this department in the group's information pamphlet that I feel may be of interest.

"The new approach.....urban streams....naturally functioning watercourse"

"This new approach was initiated in Europe and is part of an environmentally sympathetic engineering philosophy. A naturally functioning watercourse is a self regulating system and will maintain a healthy riverine environment as long as external pollution does not exceed its capability. The form of a naturally functioning watercourse will vary depending on locality. Usually, for a water course to function naturally, a riverine buffer strip is needed, consisting of trees, shrubs and water plants.

"The buffer strip performs functions as follows:

- * shades out the watercourse, thereby limiting available sunlight for plant growth and reducing water temperature fluctuations
- * traps sediment (nutrients, pesticides, herbicides)
- * protects banks against erosion
- * provides hydraulic roughness to reduce flood flow velocities
- * creates varied habitat
- * creates area for recreational use

Contributions to "Eucryphia" are always welcome and can be sent to the Editor Steve Douglas 108 Blackman Pde Unanderra 2526.

FROM THE COMMITTEE

THE WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

As mentioned in the last journal, REPS prepared a comprehensive submission suggesting many changes and additional areas of focus in a genuine effort to improve the plan which details Councils objectives for the coming 3 years.

Helen Tranter (along with other people who had commented on the plan) was invited to give a short presentation at a Council meeting detailing our areas of concern and possible improvements. Following this we were invited to discuss in greater detail with the General Manager Mr Michael Muston, our suggestions which he felt were a positive contribution to the quality of the plan.

It is with some pride that we can report that a great many of the changes we suggested have been adopted by Council. We will attempt to have a copy of the changes made at the next meeting.

TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Council's Tree Management Strategy is now out for public comment. We will have further details at the next meeting.

FIELD DAYS

It is hoped to arrange some field days, which in the past have proved extremely popular, for later in the year. The committee would welcome suggestions.

LANDCARE PROJECT

The fencing component of our current Landcare project has been completed with additional work being done at Don and Barra Dwyer's property the "Moorings" in Fountaindale Rd and a gully on Ian Archer's property "Eden Park" in Yeola Rd now protected from stock. It is hoped that these properties, as well as others previously involved in the project, will help to demonstrate the value of protecting valuable vegetation patches.

LINEAR RESERVES COMMITTEE

For a considerable time REPS, as well as other organisations throughout the Shire, has been pushing for a more integrated approach to roadside management. It would appear that this is finally starting to happen with the establishment of Council's Linear Reserve Committee.

It is headed by The Director of Engineering Charles Dunlop with representatives from various government departments including Telstra, Integral Energy, RTA etc as well as local community representatives.

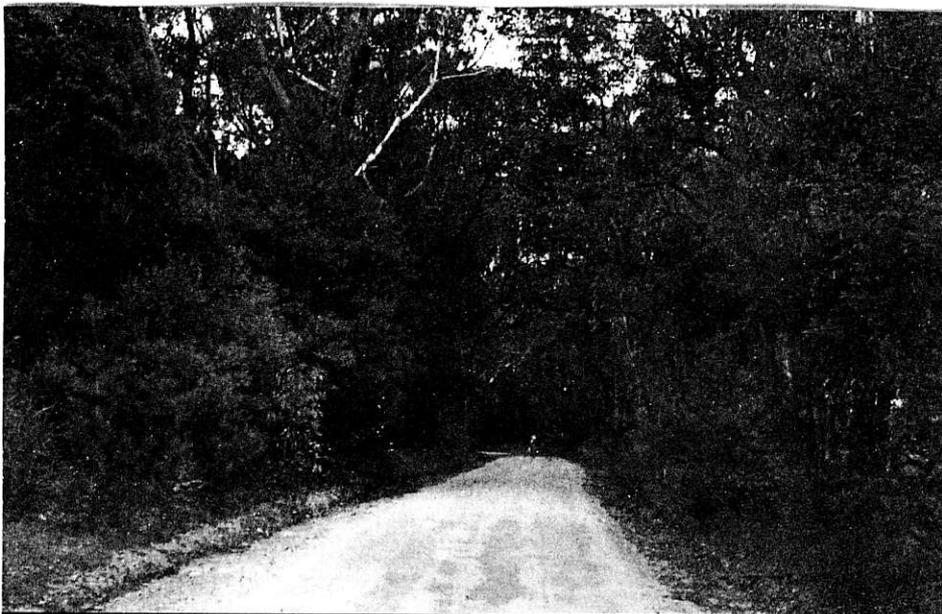
Roadside management practices have changed considerably in many places in recent times, and as understanding of the value of these community reserves has become more apparent, strategies have evolved to preserve and enhance these areas. Many may remember one of REPS first guest speakers Greg Stone, who explained many of the practices which have been put in place, particularly in Victoria.

REPS representatives on this committee feel that because of the level of commitment being shown by Charles Dunlop genuine progress is now being made. It is imperative of course to involve these people planning work, thus avoiding many potential problems before they occur. The committee is starting to make contact with these people and is having a significant impact on roadside management.

Wingecarribee is indeed only falling in line with those roadside management practices which are being adopted by many Shires throughout Australia.

In the July/August edition of the NRMA's journal "Open Road", there is an article describing Dumaresq Shire Council's efforts to develop its roadside management plan. Many rare plants in this shire exist only in roadside reserves (as in Wingecarribee) so a change in work practices was imperative. They have found that an holistic approach to roadside management has brought both environmental and economic benefits.

Another interesting fact mentioned in the article is that the area occupied by roadside reserves is about 5% of the state, the same area occupied by National Parks.



Roadside vegetation enhancing a country road at Bundanoon

WINGECARRIBEE SWAMP

As mentioned in previous reports, REPS has been seeking clarification from the Minister for Mineral Resources and Fisheries, The Hon. Bob Martin, MP. as to the situation regarding to the peat mining leases.

We have been led to believe that the leases expired in 1991 and 1992 and have since received confirmation from the Department of Mineral Resources that this is in fact correct. However mining is permitted to continue until the applications for the renewal of the leases have been considered.

Sydney Waters Draft Plan of Management for the reservoir expresses concerns over the impact peat mining is having on the filtration capacity of the swamp, and this being the case, 5 years would seem a long time to be "considering" the leases. We have written a further letter asking for an explanation.

REPS member Phillip Kodela, who has for many years been conducting research in the swamp, recently sent REPS an article by Fleur Kreef from the June 1996 edition of The Australian Financial Review Magazine, from which the following quotes are taken.

"Peat is one of those materials more easily avoided its use more habit than necessity"

"According to Professor Carrick Chambers, director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, research at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew in the UK has shown that for every horticultural use of peat there is a suitable alternative - even plant propagation and mushroom farming."

"Some would have it that peat can be regarded as a renewable resource because, although it takes a long time to form, it grows within a living ecosystem - unlike much older, finite resources such as sand, rock and fossil fuels. This view presupposes (against the facts) a rate of use which does not exceed the rate of formation. It assumes, also, that the entire ecosystem (including the water catchment) of which peat is a part will remain sufficiently unaffected by human activities to continue for the thousands of years required for the peat deposit to be replenished."

"It is, however, the particularity of each deposit, as well as their general destruction worldwide, that makes it imperative to preserve them. Wingecarribee for example, is the only peat deposit, of the 47 in NSW, to be mined." "However, as well as numerous attributes (not the least being its action as a filter to a major water supply for the Sydney region), it is home to two rare plants that are found nowhere else in the world, one of which defies cultivation."

During a recent visit to the RTA nursery at Albion Park the supervisor Maarten de Ligt stated that he doesnot use peat in his potting mixes. This nursery has a reputation for producing large quantities of quality plants, and from the stock on show appeared to have no trouble with by the non use of peat.

The following article is a continuation of the series on firewood and wood heating in the Robertson, and was written by Tricia Hogg.

THE PLANTING OF A WOODLOT AND GARDEN AROUND ROBERTSON.

I read with interest the account of Steve Douglas and Dennice Fletcher regarding their woodlot and its subsequent use as a wind break and for firewood.

Seventeen years ago we bought 40 acres along Pearsons Lane which had been used for dairying, cattle raising and vegetable growing and was almost entirely devoid of trees, apart from a blessed selection of rainforest species left in a patch in the valley. The reason we bought that particular 40 acres was its aspect, basically northerly and a rare commodity in this district. It also had water, five springs contributing to a little creek which became Johnsons Creek and henceforth flowed into the Belmore Falls valley.

We bought the land knowing the district to be cold at times, wet at times, but windy? - not as we experienced in our first year - gales which, as Steve and Dennice illustrated, would blow one over.

Nevertheless we proceeded to plant our garden, minus protection. What did survive became multi-branched and with a definite leeward inclination. Fortunately and simultaneously we planted a windbreak of three stages; *Acacia* species for initial fast growth and protection, *Eucalyptus* species ostensibly for firewood and fence posts, and a permanent barrier of *Cedrus deodara*. We were not purists and liked variety in gardens and the romance foreign species bring to mind, eg. misty Himalayan and European mountains etc. When the *Acacias* were about five years old we began to thin them and by now most have been removed. The *Eucalyptus* sp. we probably won't remove as they have grown tall and complement the *deodaras* below them.

We succumbed to the temptation to plant *Pinus radiata* to the east of the garden for protection in summer against the nor'easters and summer mists. They were quick growing, attracted cockatoos in abundance and they reminded me of old Australian homesteads and the forests abroad. I have a fondness for them even now. But, as they were planted closely, in time some will be culled. We have burnt the wood and provided it is dry, it burns well and provides good heat in an enclosed heater - beware of expanding sap when burning undried pine in an open fire as it shoots sparks in all directions. Shredded pine can also be used for mulching if it's well rotted but be wary of nitrogen deficiencies appearing in the soil from unbroken wood mulches.

ACACIA SP. Over the years many *Acacia melanoxylon* have sprung up and have been either transplanted, allowed to remain permanently or used as firewood when their presence amongst the garden shrubs proved to be obtrusive. It is excellent wood for burning. We found our *Acacia elata* also died rather suddenly about three years ago but it burnt well and its off-spring are now appearing around where the parent plant once grew. We planted several *Acacia decurrens* some of which we have used for fuel, but mostly we've used *Acacia baileyana*, fast growing with beautiful ferny foliage and abundant flowers in early spring. We burn the wood effectively when these short-lived trees die.

EUCALYPTUS SP. Our initial woodlot lay on our southern boundary and was planted principally with Eucalyptus species. Those which grew well were *E. fastigata*, *E. viminalis*, *E. smithii*, *E. maculata*, *E. globulus* and *E. cinerea*. *E. smithii* and *E. fastigata* also completely withstood attacks each summer from cockchafer beetles, while the others mentioned were not too badly eaten. We also planted one each of *Toona australis*, *Araucaria bidwillii*-Bunya pine and *Araucaria heterophylla*-Norfolk pine. These grew well after a slow start. None of these trees could now be harvested as was our intention, they are just too beautiful.

Over the years our woodlots extended into the paddocks, portions fenced off along the creek, around springs and along fences, and these fenced off sections provided opportunities for rainforest species to regenerate. *Acacia melanoxylon* and *Pittosporum undulatum* re-inhabited quickly, *Acmena smithii*, *Doryphora sassafras* and *Ceratopetalum apetalum* were transplanted when they appeared in the garden. We have a lovely specimen of *Eucryphia moorei* in the valley patch but we don't seem to have any viable seedlings.

Our three acre garden is a mixture of native and introduced species. The only way we could establish a garden was to plant native species first, then with natural attrition, plant with less hardy or rarer species not necessarily Australian native. Now the garden is virtually wind free, apart from those times of excessive winds. The treetops move but at ground level all is still. We supply all our heating fuel from plants we have grown and in the process have created habitats for many birds which live, feed and breed in copious numbers around us.

Exposed Robertson farmland is a difficult environment in which to develop a garden. Put in windbreaks first and plant thickets of hardy species to create a micro-climate for more delicate plants. It will take time but take heart from the rainforest which was once here.

FOOTNOTE: Tricia's article I feel again re-inforces the points I have previously tried to make. The rewards are there if you are willing to put in the effort. Although both articles point out some of the problems associated with establishing trees in this area, they are far outweighed by the positive aspects.

Many may remember the talk last year by Russell Cowgill from State Forests when he explained about the areas being targeted for joint venture projects. Climatically at least, Robertson met the criteria, having good soil fertility and structure and rainfall greater than 1000mm per year. The other major requirement was an established industry which of course has no effect on the way the trees grow, but makes sense I guess if you are trying to re-deploy workers from other forest industries. In "Think Trees Grow Trees" Hugh Waring states that it was these climatic conditions and the historic low risk of fire that influenced his decision to start a tree project in this area. It was interesting to note that even through the "drought years" we still received 900mm of rain.

Someone suggested to me recently that it would be nice to see a local craftwood industry develop and this could form part of the regional identity.

It would not seem impossible for a shire of this size and climate range to at least be able to sustainably produce its own firewood. In our area we have some distinct climatic advantages. Why not take advantage of them.

Tricia's article also highlights the different micro-climates that exist within our area. Different areas may require different techniques. (ie our property is located relatively close to the edge of the escarpment and frosts are a relatively minor problem, whereas I know people in town who have lost many plants to frost.)

It is through organisations such as REPS and publications like "Eucryphia" that we can share information and hopefully help to minimise losses.

Steve Douglas



Wind Break

THE wind that whistled from the West
Was blowing all the day
And so we had to plant a wood
To keep the wind away.

The wind attacked our little trees
In such a savage way;
We had to plant another wood
To keep the wind away.

If *you* should ever plant a wood,
You'll find that it will pay
To always plant a second wood
To keep the wind away.

From "Green Fingers Again"