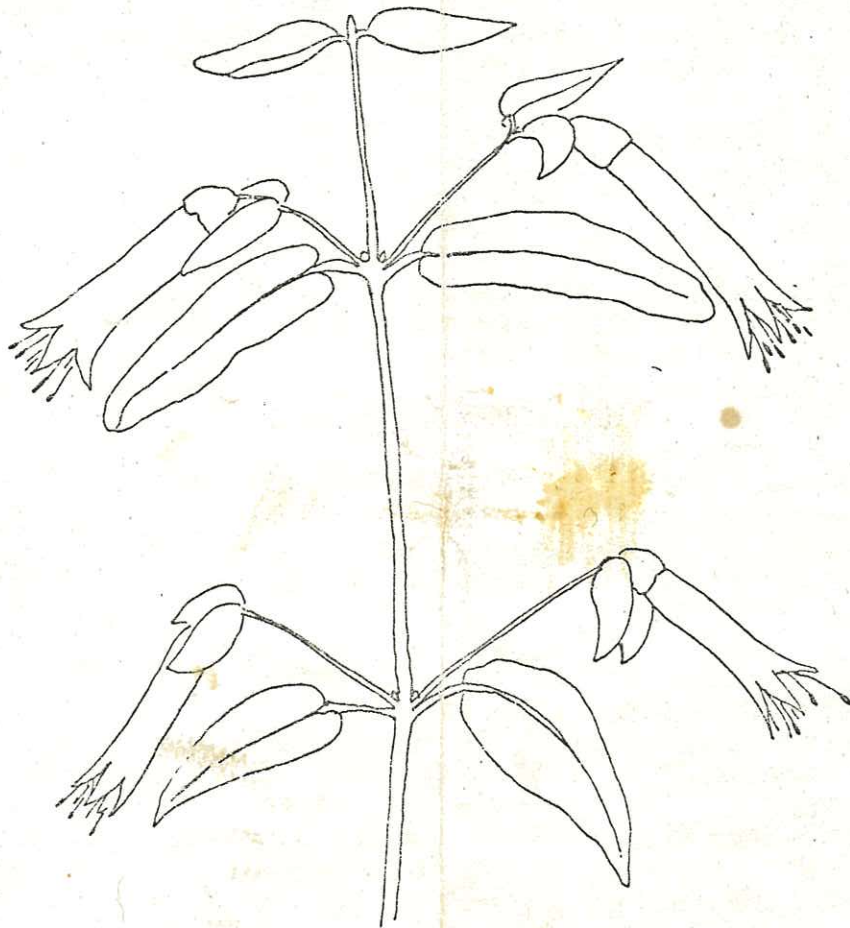


# Bend of Islands Conservation Association

Newsletter No.7

July 1983



## WHAT NATIVE'S FLOWERING.

Botanical name: Correa reflexa.

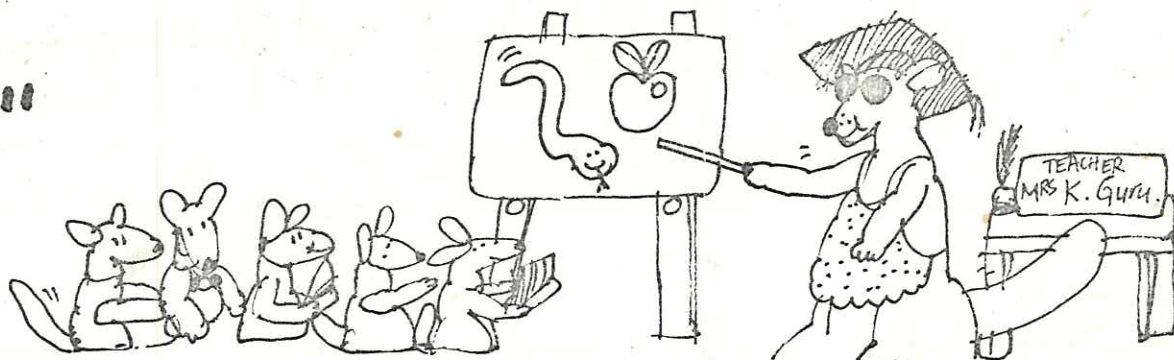
Common name: Common correa or native fuschia.

Family: Rutaceae.

Low to medium shrub with bell shaped greenish - yellow colour flowers, which occur in winter. Flowers have a pair of leaf-like bracts spreading or bent down above them. The stamens just extend out from the bell flowers.

Propagate from cuttings.

# In the beginning...



In the very early days, it must be remembered that there wasn't much car traffic, people still used horse and cart, or buggy, most of the time, and that the bitumen roads hadn't reached Eltham. Indeed there were still dairy farms along the Yarra, and farms from Burgundy Street, Heidelberg onwards until quite late in the 40's and early 50's. The steam train came as far as Eltham in 1902 and on to Hurstbridge in 1912. It was to come to Kangaroo Ground, but some influential people in the District had the route changed to Hurstbridge so that they could enjoy their lifestyle unchanged. The survey pegs were still in the ground below the Memorial Tower until a few years ago, near where Delbridge's live now. The system was changed to electric to Eltham in 1923, and to Hurstbridge in 1928.

Eltham had a few scattered shops which were built into the hillside, so that you had to climb steps to enter the shop. I can remember the Bluegum Cafe on the corner which was there until the 50's. Also the Newsagents, which also sold wool and haberdashery. On the opposite side of the road was situated Staff's, the grocers, nearby the very necessary Blacksmith, and a little later on the other side, Lyon's Garage. The Lyon's brothers also ran a taxi service and a small red bus which used to go as far as Kangaroo Ground Store.

In Kangaroo Ground, the Presbyterian Church had been built in 1878, and the School later the same year. Another building in that year was used by the Evelyn Observer Newspaper, until about 1917. They left and the building then became the Eltham Council Chambers - it was about where Douglas' live today. This building was burnt down in 1934. Two other buildings were the Kangaroo Ground Store and opposite the Stevenson's Hall, but I don't know just when they were erected.

The Eltham Hotel also had another hotel opposite, called the Fountain of Friendship. Along the road to Research was another hotel and another one in Kangaroo Ground, also at the top of the hill near the Council Chambers. Both these Hotels were burnt down on the same night in 1928. Between these two hotels was, and is to this day, the building known as Weller's Pub, built in either the late 1870's or early 1880's. For many years this charming old home belonged in the Pitman family; we have only just lost our dear friend Mrs. Pitman, who died very recently. This was a coaching stop for the Cobb and Co. Coaches. There were two Hotels in Christmas Hills, The Flying Squirrel and The Folly. If it seems a lot of Hotels, remember the poor horse couldn't go too far and there were a lot of travellers, as well as gold seekers in those early days.

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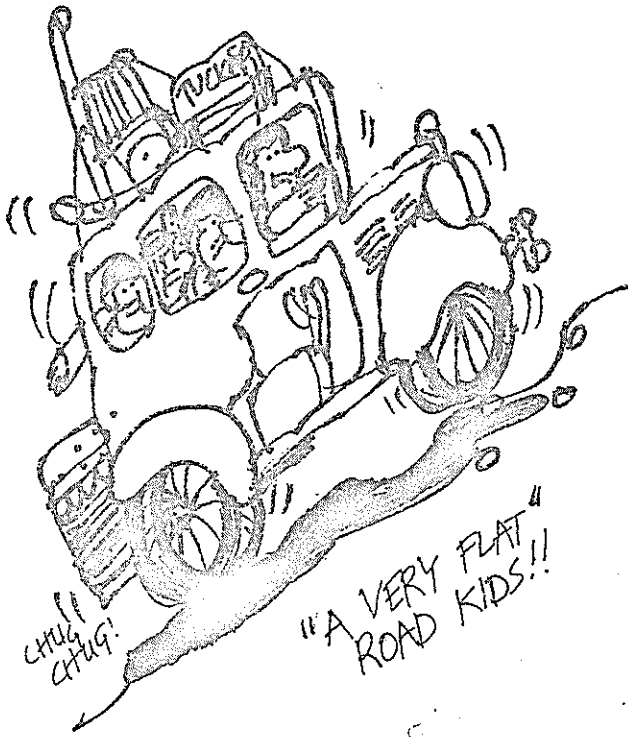
The aqueduct was started in 1887 (Stage 2 - the Christmas Hills and Kangaroo Ground section) and completed in 1891. Italian stonemasons were brought out for the project and the Foreman lived in a house in Christmas Hills, which later became the Presbyterian Manse. A brick kiln was necessary and this was located near Skyline Road; charcoal was needed for the kiln, so there were charcoal burners and therefore the timbercutters were very busy in and around the area. To help feed all these people there was a bakery near the cherry plum trees and old oak tree, below where Elgoods live.

The first bridge over the Watson's Creek, Henley Road, was a very low roughly constructed one of logs with rocks and dirt covering the top. In the wet weather the creek would rise rapidly covering the bridge so that it was impossible to pass over it until the water had gone down. Then the bridge usually had to be repaired before it could be safely used again. The second bridge was built in 1932, during the Depression to help the unemployed. The timber for this bridge was cut from the Oxley Estate, where we live now (Littlehales), being mostly Red or Yellow Box. All the work was done by hand with the men using an adze to trim the edges of the planks. I can remember standing watching the men at work with my Grandfather, not long before he died - I was about 10. Mr. Haughton and the Eltham Council put up the necessary money. The third bridge was built about 1963 of concrete and the engineers struck quite a degree of difficulty because of the sandy bottom. Finally however, it was completed and enjoy the use of this bridge without the worry of it being covered by floodwaters, as was the case even with the second bridge, even though it had been placed what was thought to well above flood level.

The early families of Kangaroo Ground were of Scottish descent as a visit to the Kangaroo Ground Cemetary will soon reveal. Some of the names which come to mind are Stevenson, Cameron, Bell, Graham, Ness, Cutch, Bouchier - the two latter being landowners on either side of Henley Road. Bouchier's property was from Menzies Road right across to the bridge - Well's owns some of the land today. Cutch owned all the land which the Board of Works controls today, as well as all the land on the left side of Henley Rd. up to Skyline Rd.

Kangaroo Ground was originally sheep country, and it wasn't until the suburban sprawl overcame the farm land brought about the change to cattle. This was because with the people came their domestic animals, particularly dogs, who roamed at will killing and maiming the sheep until the farmers became fed up. Crops were grown on either side of the Memorial Tower, mostly oats and barley. In the spring you can still see a half wild type of feed crop growing along the side of the roads there.

In the Depression years there were a lot of families living along the streams and creeks, in Research Wattle Glen and anywhere else that they could put up a small humpy of kerosene tins flattened out, bags, bark and ti-tree. It was a miserable existance, panning for a speck of gold, trapping the odd rabbit, and doing odd jobs for anyone who could afford to hire them, either for money or food. In the winter it was very cold and the creeks and streams used to flood to add to their miseries.



"A VERY FLAT"  
ROAD KIDS!!

Electricity came to Kangaroo Ground in 1958 and was hailed with much rejoicing and a party in the Stevenson Hall. It was many years before we managed to get the power down through Wells' property to Oxley Estate - from memory it would have been the late 60's. As far as the Bend of Isles was concerned I think it was later and came across the River.

Mrs. Joy Ness was a great help with a lot of the above dates and she suggests that if anyone is interested in getting further information on the area that they read "Pioneers and Painters, The Diamond Valley Story and The Christmas Hills Centenary Booklet, 1965-5. There is also to be a booklet available printed by the Leader Newspaper, of all the interesting series of articles currently being printed each week.

In 1910 my Grandfather, Mr. W.C. Oxley was brought out to the area by his Bank Manager and a friend, Mr. W. Haughton Snr. who had a Wool Brokerage firm in the City. Grandfather had a Net Manufacturing business at Middle Park on Beaconsfield Parade - fishing nets, drum nets (deep sea fishing) and tennis nets, and also was an agent for other fishing tackle, cordage (ropes) and marine engines. He had come out from Scarborough England as a young man, later bringing out his parents, his fiance, my Grandmother who had lived in Captain Cook's house in Whitby, and finally he also brought out her parents. He purchased the property, now known as Oxley estate, some 70-80 acres, and adjacent to the land owned by Mr. Haughton, later to be known as Bend of Isles.

Grandfather loved to tease his young family of 6 children, 2 boys and 4 girls, and answered their questions about the property by telling them it was very flat (in fact it has two long ridges and a flat gully area), had only a few trees (was then virgin bush) and very little water! That it was bounded by a mile of Yarra River, the same of Watson's Creek, and about another mile of Henley Rd., he didn't tell them until he brought them out to stay for some holidays. It was a hair raising trip as he drove as he sailed - liked a lot of sea room. The first cars he used were a Napier and a Star. The roads were very rough and full of ruts. Their joy on seeing the place can well be imagined - later it was always to be known as "Camp" as for quite some time they camped on the riverbank.

For the first few years the family, and if early photographs are any indication, friends as well, camped by the river where Mrs. Watson and friends go swimming today. Later a small dwelling was built near where Sharp's house is situated. This later became the Caretaker's house. In 1926 the first large dwelling was built by a builder from Glenhuntly. It was always called "The Big House", and had 2 bedrooms, a large living room, a large kitchen and a great luxury, a real bathroom with a hot water chip heater.

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There were verandahs on three sides, parts of which were later enclosed to make extra sleeping accommodation and a summer eating area at the back. The married family members built sleepouts around The Big House, but these were all burnt in the 1927 fires, which fortunately only scorched the edges of the verandahs of The Big House.

Later on they built small cottages, bringing all the materials from various suburban areas; tied onto their cars, mostly T Model Fords, with the very useful running boards loaded with the food tied over the wheel covers. A rare sight indeed to see these moving collections of timber, three ply (for linings) Fibro cement sheets, window frames, external doors, iron roofing and last but not least, the galvanised iron fireplace surrounds for the open fires as well as the wood stoves for cooking. My father, George Bleazby, used to have mother and I get in first, then he would pack us in, and then he would tie on whatever building materials he was taking at the time. Mostly we used to go up Bourke Road and oh! the horror of it all when the car used to refuse to go up the hill. Sometimes we'd even have to go home to Glenhuntly and try again the next day.

The men folk also constructed a tennis court on the flat area between Oxley Road and the narrow gully leading down to the Yarra (in Mrs. Watson's property today). It was covered with the river sand and well rolled and was much used by all the family and friends for many years. Oxley road was constructed when the Oxley estate was divided between the 4 daughters, Mrs. Bleazby, Mrs. Brufton, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Thomas as it had been left to them by their father Mr. Oxley, sometime early in the 1950's.

Also in the early days the property boundary went straight up Henley Road and it wasn't until 1948 that my Grandmother, Mrs. Catherine Oxley, gave the land to the Council (then Eltham) to be used as a Bird Sanctuary. This land was in the shape of a long triangle - bounded on one side by Henley Road, another Catani Boulevard, and the other side a Government Road access. This action gave Mr. Haughton's people in the Bend of Isles better access to their properties, particularly in the winter.

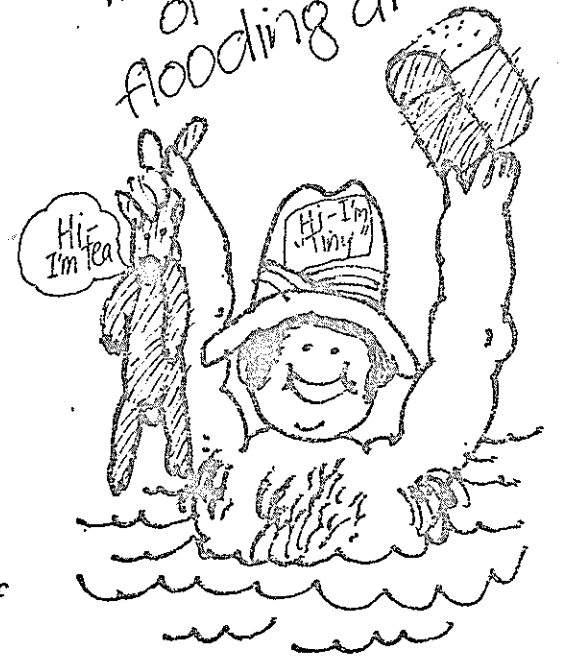
At first my Grandfather had installed a lighting plant - a diesel motor with 2 banks of glass storage batteries - and it serviced about 5-6 houses. During the war with all the men away, it couldn't be maintained and afterwards could not be repaired, a great pity. However we used lamps and candles for years until finances improved and gradually we invested in petrol driven lighting plants, which required quite a bit of maintenance and know-how. We all used wood fire stoves, bathed in basins, baby baths or the river in summer, did the washing in kerosene tins on the stove or outside on a fire between stones or again, in the river in summer. We all had collgardie safes where hopefully the meat would keep for a few days and we could, if it didn't get too hot, set a jelly. Icecream was unheard of until one Auntie bought an icecream maker! How we children loved the treat of a small serving of that icecream on a hot day. The men used to trap rabbits and we all used to try our hand at fishing, and oh! the thrill of hooking a big one. Then the battle to get it up the bank without losing it, and the ghastly bit of unhooking it. Yurk!

Life was very simple and peaceful for us children and we never wanted to go anywhere else for our holidays; after all, it was the one chance for those of us who were "only's" to have brother-sister relationship with our cousins. There were 12 of us, but not all the 12 were ever there at the one time. We used to build "cubby houses" in the bush and generally had a marvellous time just playing together. To go for walks and picnics were the great treats and one of our favourites was the walk to the "log cabins" built by Mr. Gratton, called "Milwaukee" and near the river in the Bend of Isles. Sometimes we would go to the cherry plum trees to gather the small plums for jam making, and also to play in the remains of the old bakery and house. Another walk was up to the beeman's garden and house for some honey. He lived on the corner of Catani Boulevard and Henley Road at the top end. Of course at mushroom time we used to roam over all the hills and gullies of both the Coutch and Bouchier Properties. In these days both properties were in beautiful condition, not run down and smothered with titree as the Wells' property is today. They were open grazing areas with natural grasses and stands of trees, wattle and some small clumps of titree where the sheep used to shelter in bad weather. Today the Wells' property is a horrific fire hazard and we dread to think of the outcome should there be fires in the area with it being so close to our property.

There have been some fires around the district but the one which did so much damage here was in 1962 when 5 homes were lost in the Oxley Estate. They were the Big House, Bleazby's home, Brufton's home, our home (Littlehales) and another small cottage on Ogden's property. It is a dreadful feeling to come back and to see the few remaining blackened stumps, remains of brick chimneys and forlorn looking tanks still standing. Even worse was the sight of the ravaged land with blackened tree trunks and so much bare area - it was also strange to see the contour of the land. Something we had never seen with so much bush before the fires had removed the cover.

In complete contrast was the big flash flood in 1934. It covered an incredible area - with every bit of lowlying land covered by a sea of swirling muddy water. It reached great heights along the Yarra, covering completely the land we called "the Island" opposite the Bend of Isles and Oxley Estate (where there was a market garden for many years). As the water reached Grandma's garden fence, she and Mrs. Smith, her daughter who was there on a holiday, were cut off completely for over 3 days before the water finally started to subside. During this time, the caretaker from the Memorial Tower, a giant of a man called "Tiny" (?) - swam the flooded river

"I love a  
sunburnt country -  
a land of  
sweeping rains,  
of rugged  
mountain ranges,  
of droughts and  
flooding rains!!!"



to bring them some food, a rabbit and a loaf of bread. We have had a few floods since, but never one so severe. In the last big one the creek turned back on itself and returned to its old course through our flat land and that of Mrs. Watson's on its way to the river Yarra.

In 1968-69 there were some very severe droughts and we saw much of the bush and many of the trees die. Today we are seeing a lot of evidence of dieback brought about I'm sure by these and other droughts since then, the dropping of the water table with the lack of rain in some of the winters and, of course, the incidence of fires throughout this area.

The coming of the telephone to this area brings back some funny memories! It was only possible to have a party-line phone, which was dependant on the small exchange at the Kangaroo Ground Store. This line then went over to the Exchange at Warrandyte. The Raite family ran the Store and Mr. Raite was a very independant man! The Store was only open at certain hours, and not all day, or every day, so that the exchange operated the same way. The phone lines had to be put up by the users - one line for ingoing and another line for outgoing! A friend of the family, Mr. J. Stooke and my Uncle, Mr. Syd Brufton (Mrs. Dixon's father) volunteered (?) to be the ones to erect the lines between Bouchier's on the one side and Cutch's on the other side. No mean feat when it must be pointed out that there were steep hills and gullies between each property and they had to use trees wherever possible. After many days of struggling across some of this very difficult terraine they finally came to the home stretch. By this time they were very tired and tempers were getting rather frayed at the edges. Mr. Stooke was the man on the ladder and my Uncle the "Dogsboddy" below. Finally after one more order of "No, not the hammer Syd" and then changing his mind yet again, my Uncle had had enough and instead of handing up whatever tool that was needed, said "I'm off home, get the b..... thing yourself" and off he went. We were also responsible for the maintenance of the lines, so one of the tasks after very windy weather was a walk along the lines, trying to untangle these two lines - no easy task with the depth of some of the gullies across the Bouchier land. We all became very expert throwing sticks to make the wires part company again.

In the early 30's Grandma had gone for a walk with her two dogs to the furthest boundary of the property - the fence down to the river near the Public Reserve. She fell, breaking her ankle, whilst climbing through the fence. She sent the two dogs home for help but later realized she had to help herself. So she commenced the formidable task of crawling on her hands and knees up to Henley Road! There was no Catani Boulevard then and it was a steep road. Many hours later, she had reached about where Cataini Bvd. now begins. Her state can be imagined - torn hands and knees - and as for the ankle, she had had to stop every now and then to put it back in place. A very tough Yorkshire woman my Grandmother. It was dark by this time, but fortunately there was a timber cutter returning home late with his horse and cart and he found her and took her home. A Doctor was called, but she refused to go to hospital, so she had her ankle set and she stayed home. Despite the birth of 8 children and this happening, Grandma never had a day in hospital in her life.

Her caretakers' used to help Grandmother with her large garden - she loved roses and had some magnificent varieties, my favourite being the yellow one which grew over the front gate. She also had a large vegetable garden and grew some beautiful strawberries. She had a soft spot for my husband and used to make him a scrumptious strawberry shortcake when he came on leave during the war. Mostly the caretaker used to go to Kangaroo Ground for supplies with the horse and cart but occasionally he would row across the Yarra and walk into Wonga Park for a few supplies. We never tried it so I don't know if it was any closer or he just felt like doing it!

My husband, Gordon, and I have lived on the Oxley Estate since 1946 and bought our present property in 1952 when it became available after the Estate was split up between the 4 "girls". With the exception of 4 years in Townsville whilst Gordon was in the RAAF, we have always lived here and have seen many changes to the whole District.

In Kangaroo Ground where the tennis courts are today was the Stevenson's Hall. I'm not sure when it was erected, but it was the centre, along with the Church, of our social life in the area. The Hall was used by the Church Guild, the C.W.A., the Mothers' Club, the Cub pack, the Brownies, and as well for private functions like engagements and weddings. The School concerts were always held there, occasionally a film night, the monthly dances with a proper band and the local ladies providing the supper - a real family affair, and of course, no drink! Once a year the Sunday School picnic was held at Mordiallic, and the whole District went. Once again the ladies provided all the food and the men organised the games and supervised the swimming. It just had to be a fine day and somehow, if memory is to be trusted, it always was just right.

At Xmas time we always had a big party in the Hall, and again everyone came, young and old, and enjoyed it all, every minute. We used to get donations from all over the District to make sure that all the children got a present and a lovely party. In those early days there were only a few families and we all knew one another very well. There were only 23 children in the school when my eldest two boys were there and there was no kindergarden or playgroup. Sometimes our under 5's were allowed to go to school early (my Phillip was one of these) to keep up the numbers. They used to fall asleep in class, but no one worried and let them sleep on.

In those days we didn't have a school bus or two cars, so the boys used to get a lift to school and then had to walk home - 5 miles. It was quite safe for them to do so then, what a pity it isn't the same today. They used to call into various farms along the way to give a hand with some of the chores - Mrs. Dougheny (where White's live today) used to get them to help with rounding up the sheep, collect the eggs from under the shearing shed, gather sticks for her fire, milk the cow or something along those lines. At Mr. and Mrs. Lewis' (opposite Middleton's) it would be to feed the pigs, round up the cows or again collect the eggs. They learnt a great deal about the life on a farm and the ways of the animals and how they had to be looked after. In their turn they taught me and we still laugh about my ignorance of the facts of life in livestock in those days, and I suppose it still exists for the city child as I was then.



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We didn't always have to go out to Eltham to shop as the baker used to come as far as Middleton's, and if we got our order into the Butcher, the Baker would pick it up from the store where it had been left, and bring it down to Middleton's for us. Mr. Parker, Christmas Hills, had the fruit and vegetable run for many years and it was a common sight to see the truck outside the various farms and houses and people getting their weekly order - usually on a Thursday. Another welcome visitor was the Rawleigh man who called once a month with a very comprehensive lot of products. He also brought the news of the various families that perhaps we hadn't seen for a while.

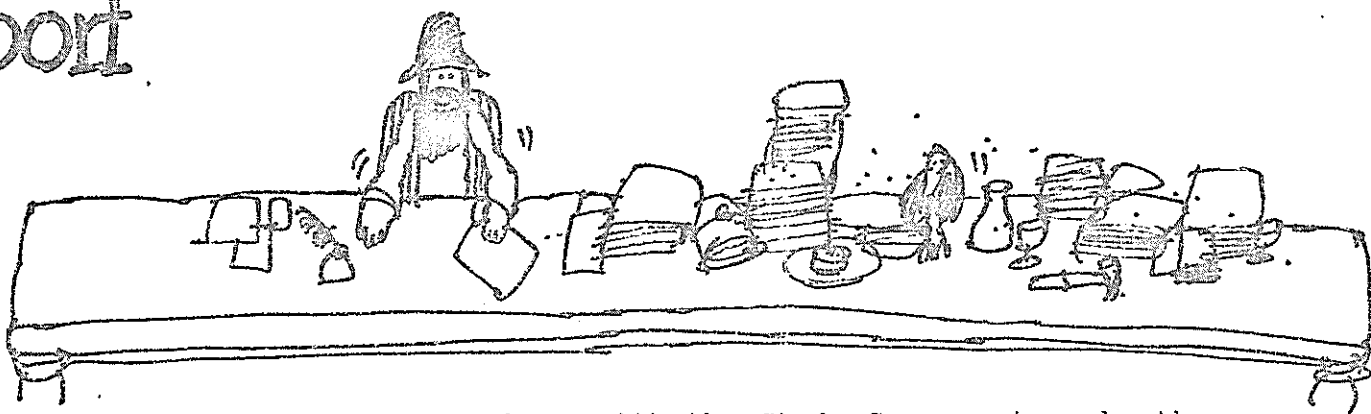
If anyone remembers the publication "The Walkabout", they may recall an article about the "family settlement" on the banks of the Yarra, which was about the early days of the Oxley family and would have been printed about the mid 30's, I think. It is interesting to note that the Doctors who eventually bought properties in the Bend of Isles did so after fishing at the V falls, below Ogden's and Dixon's, when my Grandmother lived in the Big House. They so loved the area that, after talking to her and learning of some blocks being for sale, approached Mr. Haughton to purchase them. He then lived right at the end in a house he called "The Three Bears".

In 1948 the Pan Pacific World Scout Jamboree was held on the Clifford Lewis property on the Wonga Park side of the Yarra - right opposite where Mrs. Watson lives today. The huge camp was in the bowl like area just over the hill and they all used to come down and swim in the area between the rocks. Much to our delight - young and old - we were able to row over and visit and watch all their activities. From our side of the river activities such as scrubbing of the big pots with river sand, washing of their clothes and the bathing party of an Indian Prince and his entourage was watched with great interest.

Betty Littlehailes



# Committee Report

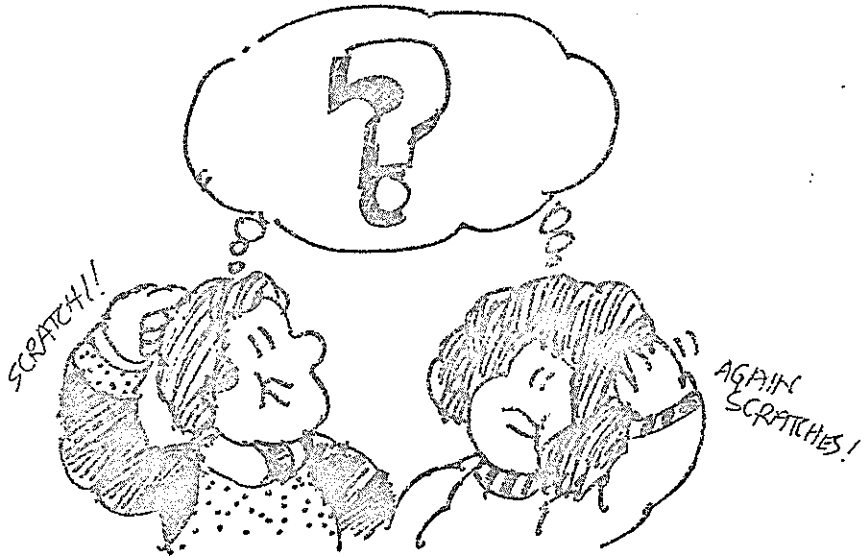


Since the last report, the main business of the committee has been with the Study Group set up by the Ministry for Planning. This group, has representatives from the Ministry for Planning, Ministry for Conservation, MMBW, Upper Yarra Valley & Dandenong Ranges Authority, Shires of Healesville, Eltham & Lillydale, B.I.C.A. and Christmas Hills Progress Association. It has been set up to monitor the progress of E.L.Z., to examine any deficiencies in the provision, to make suggestions about the land currently being held by the MMBW in the area and to examine possible applications of E.L.Z. in other areas.

Of major concern has been the large lot of land known as Yanakie, parts of which fall in two Shires, Healesville & Eltham. It is currently being (over?) grazed to sheep.

Aspects of E.L.Z. provisions under examination are

- \* the fencing provisions - what is the cut-off between adequate security and an unnecessary eyesore?
- \* how is prior non-conforming use of land defined and established?
- \* there is currently no protection for dead timber (a most important wild-life habitat) in E.L.Z. provisions.
- \* use of roads does not come under E.L.Z. - how best to overcome this?
- \* cluster subdivision for housing is potentially a good way of using large lots - the provisions do not provide suitable guidelines.



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\* it is unclear how the laws governing mining/prospecting apply in the E.L.Z.

Aside from the Study Group, other matters which have arisen have been

- S.E.C. line - a Government inquiry into the proposed duplication of the High Tension Transmission line has taken place and we have had input into this, mainly concerning potential disturbance to the sensitive river flats and billabongs.
- We have made a submission to the Land Conservation Council concerning apparent conflicting land uses in the L.C.C.'s proposals for an Alpine National Park.
- In conjunction with the Fire Brigade, a detailed fire plan for the area is being produced.
- Contact is being attempted with the Eltham Shire regarding the trail bike noises from Well's land as well as the potential erosion threat by the bikes.

John McCallum - President.

## Growing Eucalypts

Most people growing plants around their homes have been interested in species other than our local Eucalypts. This is because they have wanted ground cover, variety and or low-flammability vegetation around their homes. There is a case also for cultivation of Eucalypt species as a long term management programme. Many of our properties (mine is a good example) have areas which were cleared in excess of requirements. Regeneration with healthy seedling Red Box, Stringybark or Candlebark (or Ironbark on the older soils) would be a re-warding project. Seed collection and germination is easy. Bringing the seedlings on to a stage at which they can be planted out is a bit more involved but there are plenty of people in the area who can advise on the right techniques.

Thinking on an even broader scale, have you noticed that nearly all Eucalypt growth in the Bend of Islands is sucker growth from root-stocks left after the burn in 1962?

Would seedlings produced from locally collected seed provide trees which are overall "healthier" and more likely to last to maturity and old-age (thereby producing habitat for possums etc.) than the sucker growth which abounds at present?

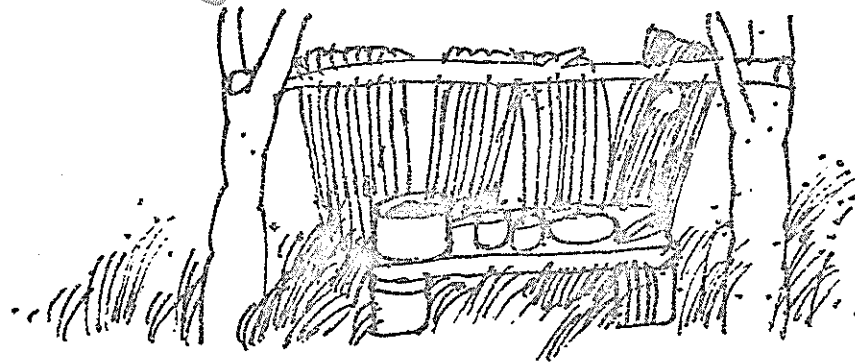
What about some correspondence on the matter from you experts out there?

John McCallum.



# THE CUBBY HOUSE

and its part in family therapy



Definitely the most popular occupation up here at Kangaroo Ground during the thirties just had to be cubby house building. That is, if you were around ages between 5 and eleven. We raggletaggle bunch of cousins built cubby houses in the bush around here almost to the point of obsession and no doubt is one wants to be clever one could make deep and meaningful remarks like 'giving expression to their feelings and behaviour' and muttering something about 'future personality patterning'. Forget all that, we just loved playing Mothers and Fathers.

Considerable effort was put into finding the right placement of trees, for our architecture was pretty basic and our building regulations always involved 4 gumtrees with precisely the correct number of branches to support the roof beams. We weren't too keen on nails for they tended to give an air of permanence and this is not what we were after. Ti tree was the favourite construction material for the walls and scrounged old bits of iron for the roof. We always felt it was a shame that the ti tree faded from it's lovely fresh green to that shower of itchy little leaves and when this happened we just moved on. But for now, once this abode of innocent bush carpentry took shape, then it was time to beg, borrow or steal (literally) bits and pieces for the interior. This could be anything from handleless cups, old saucepans and ancient clumps of bedding and cast off curtains. After a while an instant slum was created and family roles decided.

The only role which never changed was Bob's. He was always the father, and I suspect this was because of the great shortage of males within our group; it would have been too wasteful to squander a female role on him. The female roles tended to be fluid, depending on the mood of us girls and for myself, I know that sometimes I preferred to be a rather bossy mother and nag the tripe out of my younger cousins while at other times was quite content to be a gurgling witless baby. Little Dorothy was only a toddler then and was generally content to be a baby for she hadn't yet acquired the aspirations of leadership or motherhood.

So family life was acted out to our rules and we gave birth, ate, slept and had rather nasty family arguments and tried to raise recalcitrant children. The important message was though, that we had complete control over our own lives and when things got boring, uncomfortable or too much like the

real thing then it could all be changed with the magic phrase, "Say we don't do it that way and I'm the mother now". In one sentence the whole family shifted into another gear. Why do I suddenly jump the years and grab a few thoughts out of midair? Family dynamics, role reversal and other tools of family therapy spring to mind..... we could have written the books.

The days went by with meals cooked over small fires, now and then supplimented by picnic lunches from our real mothers, but who can forget the unique taste of flour and water biscuits crowned with a couple of raisins and cooked over a piece of tin? It's grey grubbiness from overhandling gave it that special crispness that nearly broke our teeth. Now and again it would rain and this always galvanised us into action for our constructions were rarely waterproof. There would be frantic efforts to stop the roof from leaking and curtains would be drawn. But we always finished up with sodden carpets and bed clothes and sat ground bravely for a while until the mothers could be heard shrieking for us to come inside.

In 1962 when bushfires burned through this area, my present day family and I drove up the next morning from the city to be faced with the still smoking char and ash. For the first time we were able to see the contours of this land which we had previously only known clothed with trees. As I scrunched around the still hot slopes I began to notice pieces of broken china and other household remnants. At first I was puzzled for there had been no dwellings on these spots. Then I began to realise I was looking at a very personal piece of social history if you like. Wherever we had built a cubby house the fire had cleared away the thirty year old debris; it was a strange feeling to see such tangible evidence of my childhood once again.

Sheila Dixon

RIGHTO  
KIDS...  
TIME TO COME  
IN!!!



# Fire Brigade

The Fire Brigade is alive and well and thinking of the next fire season. It is still a long way away but as yet we have only received 65% of last years rainfall. To have people prepare for another possibly disasterous season the Brigade is circulating a newsletter to encourage residents to take adquate fire protection measures around their houses.

The Fire Station in Christmas Hills has been lined with plaster and we will be holding work parties on Saturday 16th and Saturday 23rd July at 2 pm, all welcome (especially with a paint brush).

Michael Faris was elected Training Officer at the last Brigade meeting and is currently organizing a questionnaire to evaluate the areas of greatest need and encourage members who have not been with us lately to participate in our training course.

Once again, all welcome whether you want to become a serious member or just want to be familiar with handling the equipment and fire.

Jeph Neale (Captain)

The Christmas Hills Fire Brigade Ladies Auxiliary consists of a group of women who feel a very conscious need to support the Fire Brigade in our somewhat isolated and extremely fireprone area, both in the work of fund raising and both morally and physically backing up the Brigade in times of fire, supplying food, and first aid if necessary.

Our main function is to raise money to supply equipment for trucks, radios, etc. We have a large goal to achieve, with the building of a new shed in the Bend of Islands over the next year.

To raise money in the past, we have had a Fireman's Ball in autumn in the Christmas Hills Hall which is always a great success, a midwinter gathering and a Jumble Sale/BBQ at the end of the year. They've all proved most lucrative, with the community providing delicious food and tons of effort.

In June two members of the St John's Ambulance visited us to demonstrate the treatment of smoke inhalation, burns, snakebites and fractures.

During the fire season we have a ready supply of food and drinks for the Brigade at various points in the area, which we devliver to the site of fires if they are in the vicinity.

We meet only when necessary ie planning a function, a demonstration or talk. There are no regular meetings which appeals to us all! We welcome any new members, and if anyone can offer any ideas for fundraising we will be most receptive.

President	Dee Pelling	712 0286
Secretary	Pam McMahon	730 1652
Comm. Off.	Hilary Jackman	712 0458

# Highs and Lows in K.G.

We came to Kangaroo Ground in 1959 having bought Cherry Tree Farm practically straight on arrival from overseas. The city solicitor who handled the sale had not heard of the place and rather sourly remarked that we must have bought the property because we liked the name. I wonder what he would have said if he could have foreseen that we would move on to face Wallaby Bend and Arthur's Mistake! A striking personality owned Cherry Tree at the time, Jean de Castella, who in spite of having Lilydale name after his Aunt Lily, still spoke with a strong Swiss French accent and had exchanged the traditional wine making activities of his family for designing church windows and lead-lighting.

Cherry Tree must have been typical of the local "light soil" properties. It had a derelict apricot orchard, a sand pit reserve, great big volcanic rocks (we didn't know at the time that they could have made our fortune in garden landscaping!) and an elaborate gold mine which had been still worked at odd-times until the previous year. An impressive mound of empty flagons surrounded the miners' bungalows. The mine was fascinating - it consisted of several tunnels, a sort of cave shored up with timber beams and several very deep pits - favourite siesta spots for our wombats. I gather most of the mining had been given up after a flood. Someone said recently that the mine has been filled in for safety but when I went to look I found that it is now a large private tip!!

The rocks were a headache, they just seemed to grow out of the soil, and we learnt that one particular mound had been built by old Mr. Nicholas (the father of an early local schoolmaster) whose life task was to try and clear the paddocks. One night he did not come to tea and was found dead on the stones. They must have been caused by an offshoot of the famous Kangaroo Ground "black soil". We just got the stones, not the soil! Actually there are about 2,000 acres of rich volcanic soil around the Memorial Tower - incredibly fertile. The Tower itself is on the site of an extinct volcano and it is thought that runs of lava in prehistoric times diverted the course of the Yarra from the flat country and pushed hills around it. This could account for the presence of river washed gravel in some of our hills.

The orchard must have been the last vestige of some of the Kangaroo ground orchards at the end of the last century. The ridge between Cherry Tree and the monument was a property called "Bankhead" and belonged to old Jim Stevenson. If Jim liked the look of you he would show you the last remains of what had been a prosperous vineyard, the old vats and presses and proudly told of the prizes the wines got in France and of supplying Government House with wines till the phylloxera decimated the plants. The property had been in the family since 1849 when it was settled by Joseph Stevenson. It seems that there was government planning even in those days; Mr. Bruce Ness can show a licence to have a vineyard issued to his grandfather in 1890!

However, our lovely peaceful days in Kangaroo Ground were not to last long for early one sunny day in February 1960, we got up to find a neat row of newly painted white pegs all along the main road, at the same time the local paper that week displayed half a dozen notices of intention to mine basalt by the Albion Quarrying Co. on our black soil properties. Naturally, we were all stunned and a great deal of discussion took place - some of the landowners hoped they were safe as their very old titles gave them absolute ownership of their land down to the centre of the earth. However no chances were taken - anxious meetings were held, the National Trust intervened, and finally, in June, 1961 the matter was scratched.

This was the beginning of a series of trials and tribulations as the next horror hit us shortly afterwards. The hideous power line! We all saw the plan and soon realised that someone had taken great pains to route it over every other homestead in the district. We pleaded, protested, suggested alternatives that would have wrecked our neighbours in order to save our shed, but to no avail - the result is with us for all time.

Next came the 1962 bushfires with the severe heat, high winds, fear, black soot, blowflies and the general black misery that followed and affected the next couple of years of our life. Out of it came a wonderful lesson in human kindness, warmth, compassion and generosity. 21 years later I still feel humble about it.

However, more trouble was around the corner; unbeknown to us a Parliamentary Public Works Committee had been convened in 1959 and their findings made public in 1962. They were advocating the construction of 3 dams, at Yarra Brae, Sugar Loaf and Watson's Creek to supply water to 5 million people in Melbourne. Years of heartbreak and uncertainty followed and out of it emerged the Environmental Living Zone.

In relation to the E.L.Z., I cannot resist telling the story of Joseph Hurbie who must have been the first conservationist in Xmas Hills.

Apparently he was a very young Richmond Councillor who had a property in Dixon's Creek in the 1890's. This was destroyed in a bushfire and he came to Yarra Glen to buy some fence posts. While he was staying at the Lithgow Hotel he noticed an auction going on and when he found that the property auctioned was called "The Rigi" he remembered admiring the Rigi in Switzerland and promptly bought it sight unseen. He later went to see his purchase (in Skyline Road) and found a couple of deer and many Kangaroos on the place, in addition to the marvellous view we all know, so he decided that the Rigi would be a wildlife sanctuary.

Joseph was a man of imagination; in 1899 he heard that the convict ship "Success" was lying at the bottom of Sydney Harbour (Kerosine Bay?) and had it raised and restored. It was a 3 mast schooner built in Burma and of teak in 1790 and had ended it's days as a floating convict prison. He



had it restored down to every detail and put a wax figure of a convict in every one of the 87 cells. In spite of the Sydney Harbourmaster declaring the ship unseaworthy, he assembled a crew from New Zealand and took her out one night. He then spent the next 13 years sailing the Success around the world as an exhibition, with his family on board for some of the time. Whilst in Ireland he visited Blarney Castle and bought a piece of stone - for 20 Pounds complete with certificate of authenticity to bring back to Xmas Hills. By then the Rigi had been burnt out and when it was rebuilt, a tower recalling that of Blarney Castle was erected and the stone built into it. Unfortunately, this second house was destroyed in 1939 with the certificate, but the tower is still there and you can still kiss the Blarney Stone if someone will hold you upended down the tower - and this is not Blarney.

P.S. There is a lot of information on "Success and Xmas Hills and the two guest houses on Muir Rd. which used to have guests picked up in a waggon and pair from Yarra Glen.

Claire Watson

#### ART

Life Drawing Group: Meets 12.30 every Tuesday in good weather at the Creek House, Henley Road, and in bad weather at Neil Douglas'. Contact Wendi Henderson, 712 0393.

#### WILDLIFE

Bird Observers Group: Holds monthly meetings. Contact Jim Mattiske, 819 1884.

#### KIDS

Babysitting Club: Dee Pelling, 712 0286.

Playgroup: Meets every Tuesday morning at different homes. Contact Cric Henry, 712 0547.



COUNCIL NEWS

Dams in the ELZ: The matter of dams in residential areas arose and the town planner was asked to prepare a report for Council. The report made many recommendations regarding dams in all of Healesville's IDO zonings and initially proposed that within the ELZ dams be prohibited. However subsequent amendments resolved that dams up to 400 cubic metres (400,000 litres or 88,000 gallons) be a "consent use" (permit must be obtained) and that the dam be incorporated in kitchen garden/livestock pens allotment (ie within the 7% of total allotment area).

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation are conducting an inquiry into the Environmental Impact of bushfires with the terms of reference:

- (a) environmental impacts of bushfires;
- (b) environmental impacts of preventative and control measures;
- (c) environmental impacts of bushfire risks associated with evolving and future lifestyles;
- (d) potential for further development of insurance, taxation and other financial instruments to reduce environmental impact of bushfires;
- (e) potential for further developing of zoning and other landuse management arrangements to reduce environmental impact of bushfires;
- (f) adequacy of community information regarding fire management in natural and rural environments; and
- (g) appropriate Commonwealth actions to ameliorate environmental impacts of bushfires, particularly in relation to national and international heritage.

We have asked that the deadline of 8 July be extended. Please comment if interested in this issue. Contact Tim Ealey, Andy McMahon or myself.

We are concerned that Sugarloaf was renamed Winneke Reservoir. While we have nothing against Sir Henry Winneke, we would like to see the original name of the place reinstated. If you wish to see Sugarloaf renamed please write to:

Mr. M.J. McDonald, MP, Evelyn Electorate Office, Church Street, Whittlesea 3757.  
 The Hon. D.R. White, Minister of Water Supply, 590 Orrong Road, Armadale 3143.  
 Place Names Committee, C/- Department of Crown Lands and Survey, State Public Offices,  
 Melbourne 3002.

Proposed changes to the Uniform Building Regulations will permit the minimum size of dwellings to be reduced to three squares.

Application has been made to the state government for funds, under the Employment Initiative Programme, to rebuild the Christmas Hills Hall. To make this project succeed we need community support, both financial and in labour, to help supervise and train the participants. We would like the community's

ideas on how they would use a new hall, and their ability to help physically and in fund raising. Please give use your ideas (and later on your money and/or time).

For details contact Ross Henry, 712 0547, or myself, 712 0486.

Note: Ross has drawn up plans based on feedback received to date.

John Roberts



Dear Sir (or Madam!),

You asked for a contribution in the way of local history. That will need to wait for some future issue. In the meantime I would like to submit some thoughts upon another subject which might eventually lead to, amongst other things, the collection of our local history.

It's 3 years now since we first drove down Henley Road and saw our first mud-brick house. We easily made our decision, this was the place for us. Very soon we had a block land, house design and were able to commence building. There followed two exciting and satisfying years of building our own mud-brick house. Now how do we make a success of living out here?

After six months of residence, one is able to have a fair idea of what the Bend of Islands is all about. The one thing that binds us all together as a community is, no doubt, our joint concern for the natural environment with a desire to live here with as little disturbance to it as possible, also to ensure that this community survives into the future. The BICA is an excellent vehicle to these ends, but I feel there needs to be much more than that. The members of this community have many and varied interests and small groups have been formed from time to time to satisfy their needs, but with only limited success. Somehow there appears to be a need for a Community focus with which to identify, a meeting place to plan and fulfill these needs.

What I envisage is a not too large structure of mud-brick in a bushland setting to be used for gatherings both formal and otherwise. It would be the headquarters of the BICA, the bird observers, the food co-op, natural and local history groups, music and bushwalkers, etc. It could house a small reference library, be provided with an open fireplace for cold winter evenings and a barbecue for the summer months. It would need to be fire and vandal proof with car parking facilities, preferably well away from it so as not to damage its environs.

Perhaps if there is enough interest in this concept a sub-committee could be formed in the near future to research the feasibility of acquiring a suitable piece of land and a method of funding such a project.

Yours sincerely,  
Mick Woiwod.

I hope that Mick's letter stimulates some discussion on the possibility of having a community centre. Perhaps we could have further comments in the next newsletter? C.K.

## BEND OF ISLANDS FOOD CO-OP.

At a meeting earlier this year, our Bend of Islands Wholefoods Co-op resolved to continue (despite a few problems) in a "back to basics" way, that is buying good quality fresh bulk produce direct from wholesalers, reducing packaging, and saving a bit by buying in bulk.

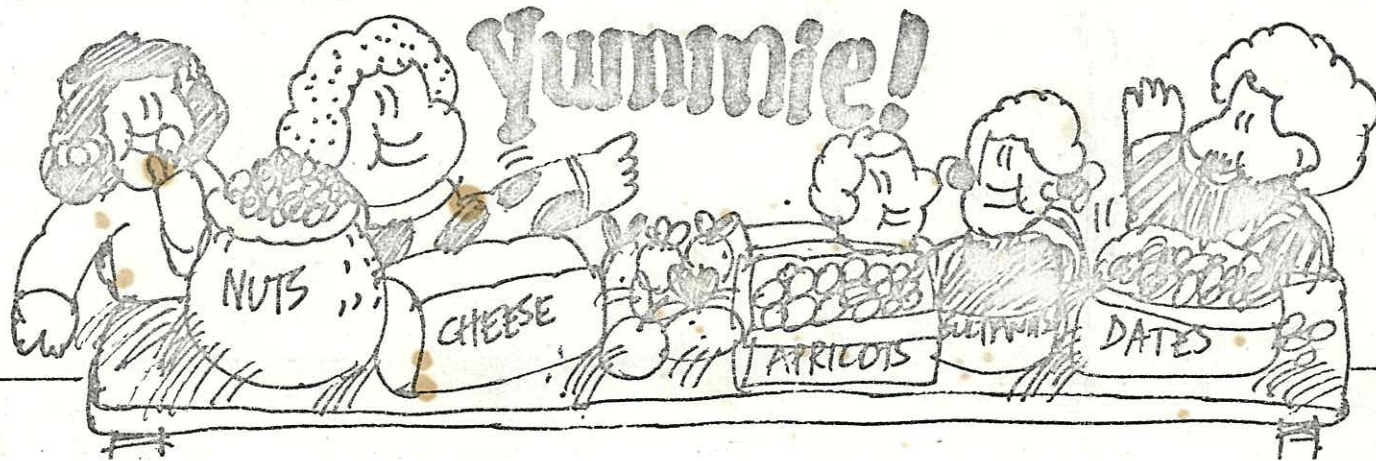
The Food Co-op is aiming to have three "buys" a year (an August buy is coming up) organised by rostered members. At least two families will be responsible for each buy.

We'll be buying mainly non-perishable unpackaged "bulk" produce e.g. dried fruits, nuts, flours, cereals, oils, soap, toilet rolls, honey, sugar, pasta, etc. We're experimenting with some fresh fruits and vegetables too, and have re-emphasised our orientation towards natural and healthy foodstuffs which are minimally processed.

The "back to basics" also simplifies buying procedures for rostered members who now have fewer (new) suppliers to deal with, and the details and information for buyers is, as usual, obtained from the Co-op co-ordinator.

After a recruiting campaign, Co-op membership has been boosted and our last buy certainly revealed a resurgence in enthusiasm, but we could still take more families. Preference is given to "local" residents i.e. Bend of Islands, Christmas Hills and Kangaroo Ground. Anyone joining needs to clearly understand that they will be expected to take a turn as buyer, will need to come to order nights, and distribution days, and will need to put in a bit of work from time to time. Such is the nature of Co-operatives!

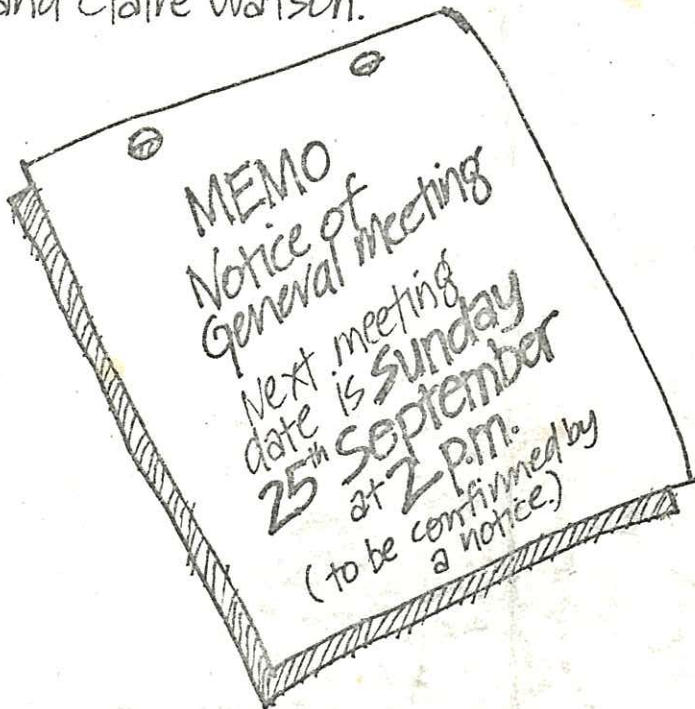
It is fun, and the food is yummy, and if you'd like to join membership is \$30, (refundable on leaving). Contact Co-ordinator Barbara Cargill on 712-0426, or talk to an existing Bend of Islands Wholefoods member for more information.



# Newsletter Workgroup

Many thanks to our convenor Caroline Kardachi, Julie Taylor for typing, Cric Henry and Wendi Henderson for general help and Syd Tunn for illustrations.

Also to all those who contributed articles, especially Betty Littlehales, Sheila Dixon and Claire Watson.



## Healesville referendum

A number of people have received fines from the Shire of Healesville for failing to vote in the recent referendum and have been told that not knowing of the referendum is not an adequate excuse. John Roberts is interested in feedback from people who have received notices, whether they have paid the fine or not, as he wants an estimate of the numbers involved. He may bring the matter up in Council. Contact him on 712 0486.

### B.I.C.A. SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you are in arrears or wish to join the Bend of Islands Conservation Association, please clip the coupon below and mail, together with \$6.00 per person to: Michael Pelling, Treasurer, P.O. Kangaroo Ground 3097.



Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for B.I.C.A. subscriptions for the following persons (include addresses and phone numbers):

Four horizontal lines provided for listing names, addresses, and phone numbers of subscribers.

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## LANDSCAPING WITH FIRE PREVENTION IN MIND.

At the last B.I.C.A. General Meeting, we had an open discussion on fire behaviour and what we should do individually and collectively to help cope with fires in our area.

### Some important points were raised :-

- The choice of particular species of plants is not as important as the knowledge of some basic landscaping principles. (some listed below)
- When landscaping around the house restrict the use of the more inflammable plants, such as those from the Myrtaceae family i.e. such species as Eucalyptus, Leptospermum (Tea-tree or Burgan), Callistemon (Bottlebrush), Melaleuca (Paperbark). These plants have higher quantities of inflammable oils in their leaves.

Those plants which maintain a high water content, have low quantities of oil and resin, and firm bark, generally have a lower fire hazard. e.g. broad-leaved acacias such as *Acacia stricta*, *Acacia pycnantha* (for dry sites) and *Acacia melanoxylon* and *Acacia dealbata* (for moister sites.)

Around the house minimize the use of trees with fibrous or stringybark e.g. *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* (red stringbark) or with ribbon bark e.g. *Eucalyptus viminalis* (manna gum). These trees more readily carry the fire into the tree crown and also the burning bark can be easily caught by the wind and carried ahead of the front of the fire producing spot fires.

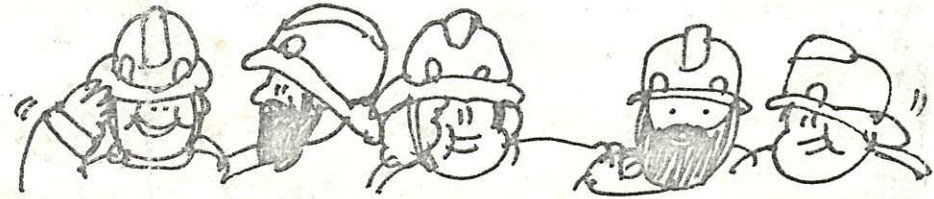
- Make sure that plants around the house are healthy. - remove any dead wood by pruning and remove any accumulated debris around or within the plants.
- It is better to have a mosaic canopy of trees rather than clearing all the trees around the house. This clearing can create a turbulent effect in a fire situation.
- Planting of shrubs and trees should be scattered or in isolated broken groups rather than in continuous mass planted banks, which can lead the fire right up to the house.
- The raking of leaf litter around the house or in hot spots such as gullies is important to help reduce the intensity of the fire. Litter should be mulched or burnt. Burning should take place in late Spring - (the burn is less damaging ecologically to the bush and there is less weed regrowth).
- With the raking of leaf litter it is important that the soil is not left bare, as weeds can

become more easily established and the topsoil eroded away. Either leave a thin amount of leaf litter behind or cover the soil with a layer of gravel, to act as an easily maintained outdoor living area.

Many other issues were raised which need looking at in more detail e.g.

- How should the burning of leaf litter be done.
- Can the burn be done collectively or with the assistance of the Fire Briagade.
- The importance of monitoring the effects of the burns.
- The importance of becoming aware of Fire Brigade and Group Headquarters procedure.

These points and more fire information will be in a future newsletter.



FIRE SEMINAR.

A seminar to discuss fire behaviour, fire control techniques, conservation oriented fire policy - to be held on 6th and 7th August. For more information contact the Conservation Council of Victoria, G.P.O. Box 845 J, Melb. 3001 or Ph. 6631561.

Another fire seminar organised by Monash Uni. and Forest Commission on 16th and 17th Sept. to discuss fuel reduction and burning. Contact Tim Ealey for more details. Ph.7120347.

LOCAL NATIVE PLANTS FOR SALE.

The following page lists some of our local native plants which Rod Parsons from Parsons Nursery, (Research-Warrandyte Rd. Research) will propagate for us to a "tube"size. Tear off the order form and send to Cric Henry, P.O. Kangaroo Ground. before 3rd August so that we can collect the seed and cutting material in time. The tubed plants should be ready in about a year's time.

Watch for  
up-coming exhibition of  
bush paintings and  
native flora and fauna  
oil paintings, watercolors  
and pastel drawings  
by four aspiring  
local artists:

Fabian Douglas  
Tessa Ruffle  
Bidly Heathcote  
Wendi Henderson

at Neil Douglas'

From Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September  
to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October  
each day from 10 am to 4 p.m.

24  
Exhibition of figurative  
drawings and paintings by

Syd Tunn

opens: 2-6 pm Sunday  
7<sup>th</sup> August 1983

closes: 6 pm Friday  
19<sup>th</sup> August

viewing preview:  
2-6 pm Saturday  
6<sup>th</sup> August

at Young Originals Gallery  
110 Punt Road, Windsor 3181  
tel: 529 2924

hrs: 2-6 pm Sat. and Sun.  
11-6 pm Wed. Thurs. Fri.