

BEING GREEN

OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY

**The First 50 Years
1955 - 2005**

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THANK YOU

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The First 50 Years

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a grass roots organization begun by a small band of local residents who loved the bush and trees which gave their suburb its special character and who were concerned at the deterioration of their environment. It is also the story in microcosm of what has happened all over Australia when growing suburbia has encroached on natural landscapes, destroying or degrading the bushland, and of the varying responses of local communities and local governments to these changes. The chequered history of conflict and co-operation between residents and officialdom which emerges from these pages is the inevitable result of the different attitudes to the conflicting pressures for development and the need for environmental action to protect not only natural systems but also a desirable urban lifestyle.

Since its inception in late 1955, Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society has been a truly local organization, able to attract concerned citizens, to provide a forum for discussion, to disseminate information and to translate private concerns into public action. It also developed a wider environmental outlook, supporting conservation efforts by others throughout N.S.W., Australia and sometimes on the world scene. Thus, the history of 50 years of Society activity touches on those important battles which were being waged on the environmental front beyond the confines of the local area.

OFF is a society where people with interests in nature, outdoor activity and environmental matters can meet in friendship with the knowledge that monthly meetings and outings are both educational and enjoyable. Despite its humble beginnings, it has developed into a respected community organization, strongly identified with the local area and with a positive input into the broader conservation movement in this State.

CHAPTER 1 THE SOCIETY IS FORMED

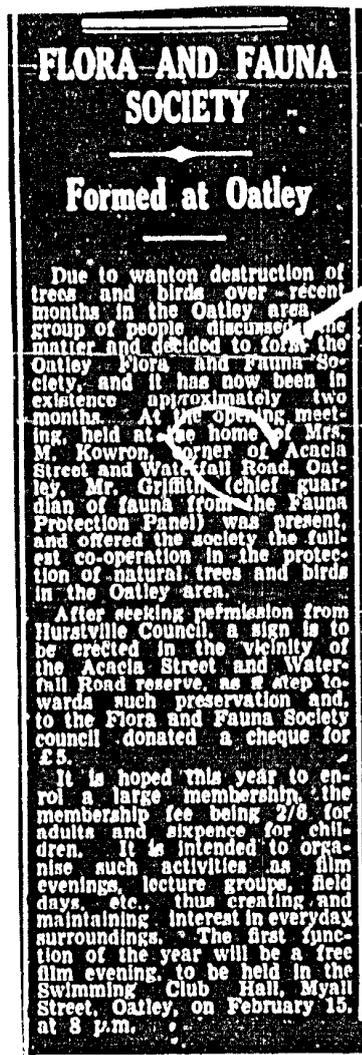
In the early 1950s, a young couple, Rafael and Moyia Kowron, came to live in West Oatley near Lime Kiln Bay and Oatley Park. They were delighted with the natural bushland surrounds, but appalled at the wanton destruction and vandalism that was taking place. Groups of boys would arrive at weekends to have tree chopping contests, rubbish was being dumped, plants pulled up and fires deliberately started. They determined to do something about it and began calling on all houses in the vicinity to seek opinions and stimulate concern and interest. They also approached council aldermen, the local Progress Association, Fauna Protection Panel and Tree Wardens League.

At a Progress Association meeting, the Kowrons invited interested people to their home on the corner of Waterfall Road and Acacia Street to meet Mr F.J. Griffiths, Chief Guardian of Fauna in N.S.W., who had offered to attend a meeting if some people could be gathered together. This meeting was held on 30th November 1955. About twenty people attended and heard Mr Griffiths give a lengthy talk on the various ways of setting up a society which would protect flora and fauna and encourage people to take an interest in their local surroundings. It was suggested that this interest could be stimulated by regular picture nights, discussion groups and field days. All agreed that a Flora and Fauna Society was needed and a steering committee was formed. This consisted of six people – Rafael Kowron, Moyia Kowron, Doris Newbould, W. (Mick) Staples, Harold Barr and Don McMinn.

One week later, on December 7th, the committee held another meeting to establish the basic framework of the Society and to plan future activities. It was agreed that the name of the group should be “Oatley Flora and Fauna Society” (the word “Conservation” was not added until 1967). Membership fees were set at 2/6d (25 cents) per year for adults and 6d (5 cents) for children. Officers were elected, with R. Kowron as Acting President and Treasurer, M. Kowron as Secretary, D. Newbould as Publicity Officer and W. Staples as Advisory Officer. Dates of meetings were organized and lists of contacts for lectures and field days were drawn up. The purchase of a rubber stamp with the Society’s name and a receipt book was authorised. It was realized that publicity was important so the local newspaper “The Propeller” was contacted and plans were made to display signs in Oatley shops. Letters were to be

written to local schools with a view to encouraging children to take an interest.

The next two committee meetings, on January 10th and February 7th 1956 were concerned mainly with organization for a free film night to be held on February 15th. Mr Griffiths had offered to supply films, a projector, screen and an operator for this meeting and to briefly speak to the audience. The Swimming Club Hall on the corner of Wonoona Parade and Myall Street, West Oatley, was booked for 8 pm, supper arrangements were made and publicity in the form of posters and a circular letter was organized. Extra posters were drawn up for display in the Post Office and the Gungah Bay bus. In the following days notices appeared in shop windows, on light posts and in the local press. "Flicks, Swimming Club Hall" was chalked on pavements. A duplicated letter, headed "Flix for Nix" was delivered to every house in East and West Oatley and nearer parts of Mortdale announcing a free film show on native animals and flowers.



The idea of free films was not new. In the pre-television days of 1954-55, there were regular monthly film shows in this hall, which were always well attended. The kids sat up front on uncomfortable school forms and there was supper afterwards. But the focus on the environment was new and the response to all this publicity was overwhelming. The plan was to show part of the film, then have a

ORIGINAL NOTICE OF FORMATION OF D.F.F.
THE PROPELLER, Feb. 7th 1956

break and serve tea. Committee members could then move among the audience enrolling members wherever possible. But these plans had to be modified on the evening because of the large attendance. Doris Newbould later described that first meeting in a Fauna Protection Bulletin :

It was a hot night, the small local hall was packed, with dozens of people standing and a crowd around each open window trying to see and hear. It had been intended to provide free cups of tea in the interval but this had to be abandoned. Mr Kowron spoke briefly about forming a Flora and Fauna Society and asked those interested to give in their names. We missed a lot of the names because of the crowd but enough were secured...though, of course, many came only to the free film night."

The success of the free film evening was repeated on the evening of 27 February 1956 when Thistle Y. Harris, well-known author of "Wild Flowers of Australia", was guest speaker, showing coloured slides of wildflowers and talking on how to identify native plants. She was the first of a long line of distinguished and expert speakers on natural history and conservation topics to address the Society's meetings. Such meetings became an important social meeting place for members and the backbone of its environmental educational activities.

The first Annual General Meeting was held on 26 March 1956. It was then that the first full committee was elected . It consisted of Harold Barr (President), Mrs Moyia Kowron (Secretary), Rafael Kowron (Treasurer), Mrs Doris Newbould (Assistant Secretary and Publicity Officer), Mrs D. Johnstone, Kevin Mitchell, Mrs Heather Aynsley and Don McMinn. Rafael and Moyia Kowron both declined the position as President as at that stage the President acted mainly as a figurehead and they felt that they could do more of the ground work as Secretary and Treasurer. A number of prominent people were asked to be President but all declined.



Moya and Rafe Kowron at Oatley Park in February 2005

CHAPTER 2 THE EARLY YEARS 1956-59

It is not surprising that the focus of the Society's early activity was on the bushland parks of Oatley West. Even before the first General Meeting, the steering committee was writing letters about the cutting down of trees in this area. In February 1956 a special appeal was made "to children not to take pieces of living trees when collecting wood for Empire Day bonfires". One way to stop this damage to the bush was to become an Honorary Ranger under the Fauna Protection Act (Wild Flowers and Native Plants Protection Act, 1927). In January 1956, the first Hon. Rangers were appointed, receiving their identification cards in March 1956. In all, nine residents from the streets surrounding Lime Kiln Bay and Oatley Heights Parkland were appointed rangers. Their names were printed in the Government Gazette of March 1956. These included Rafael Kowron, Don McMinn, Harold Barr, Mick Staples, Les Spires, Poss Davis and Darryl Arthur. The first three of these were on the O.F.F. committee. Also in January, a letter was written to Hurstville Council suggesting that a large hand-painted metal sign be erected near the bushland at the bottom of

Acacia Street to help eliminate the destruction of plants and wildlife. Council agreed and donated five guineas (\$10.50) towards the sign which read: "This is your reserve. Please protect the trees, flowers & birds. Wanton destruction and rubbish dumping punishable by law. Oatley Flora & Fauna".

After the General Meeting, the new committee was very active. Hurstville Council's attention was directed to the number of trees in Oatley Park infested with termites and borers. It was agreed that if Council would supply the necessary poisons and tools, Society members would do the work. Don McMinn organized the project and, with permission from Council, willing members, including juniors, worked at weekends cutting down and burning dead trees or spraying to restore live trees. Another project was to plant trees in a small Council reserve (now Stevens Reserve) on the corner of Oatley Park Avenue and Gungah Bay Road. Council supplied the trees. (These subsequently died and in June 1960 Council agreed to some replanting of native species, including Cootamundra Wattles). Over the years, the Society often fostered tree planting in local reserves, an activity in which many junior members took part. In more recent years, in keeping with changes in environmental attitudes, the Society has supported the retention of dead trees for habitat protection and the planting of trees and shrubs indigenous to the local area rather than just any Australian plant.

One of the first problems to be faced by the new Society was a rifle range proposed by the Hurstville Small Bore Rifle Club in the bushland of Oatley Heights Park adjoining Oatley Park just down from Waterfall Road on the other side of Lime Kiln Creek. In July 1956 clearing began apparently with the approval of Council officers. Rafael Kowron made a frantic call to the local alderman, Hedley Mallard (who was playing golf at the time). He was not happy about having his game interrupted, but put an immediate stop to the clearing when he arrived. The Society subsequently strongly protested to Council and the Department of Lands and the project was abandoned.

From the very first, the monthly talks and slides, followed, where possible, by a field day, were an integral part of the Society's activities. In 1957, the first Syllabus was printed, a programme of the year's activities on a card which was issued to every member. The Constitution of the Society was printed on the Syllabus. The committee for 1957 consisted of Keith Williams (President), George Ringham (Vice-president), Rafael Kowron (Hon.

Secretary-Treasurer), Doris Newbould (Assistant Secretary-Publicity Officer), Heather Aynsley and June Lane (Advisory Officers) and Valerie Barr and Robert Eyre (Junior Representatives). The Syllabus was sponsored by L.C. Vidler of the Oatley Florist, 20 Oatley Avenue. This Annual Syllabus (now called the Programme) has been issued every year to the present in much the same format as the original.

A strong emphasis in these early years was on education, and junior members were especially encouraged. Each month a reminder was sent out before the meeting. Schools in the district were notified and a notice sent to the press. Junior members delivered the notices; printing and duplicating were carried out by a member. The local RSL assisted by allowing the use of its duplicator. Poster competitions were organized for juniors, with prizes donated by members. On one occasion, the local paper made a mistake and stated that a prize would be given to the youngest competitor. It was decided to award the prize. Committee members made small donations and Gordon and Gotch gave a discount to enable a book to be purchased for 4/6d (45c).

The Australian Museum, Royal Zoological Society, University of Sydney and other bodies were generous in providing speakers. The quality and expertise of these speakers can be seen in the following list and set a trend for the decades to come. This was, and still is, a major reason for the consistently high attendance numbers at monthly meetings.

April 1956 Arnold McGill, ornithologist, spoke on the birds to be seen around Oatley.

May S.T. Turner of the Tree Wardens League spoke on native trees and shrubs.

June Allen Strom and Allan Fox showed a film about the Caloola Club and slides of Kosciusko and Warrumbungle National Parks.

July Mr Roberts of the Gould League of Bird Lovers spoke on "The Problems of Bird Migration". At this meeting two prizes were presented for the junior members' poster competition. They were won by Robin McNamara, aged 12, of Oatley Park Road, [see boxed text], Keith Polley, aged 9, of Mortdale and Denis Lane, aged 11, of Penshurst.

August Roy Mackay (or McKay?) of the NSW Reptile Club brought in three live snakes and ten lizards for a talk on reptile habits. Attendance at this meeting was 70 persons.

September Ernest Constable, of the Sydney Botanic Gardens, described the work being done on the flora of N.S.W. During his talk he described and showed a specimen of a rare *Blechnum* fern [probably *Blechnum camfieldii*] which used to grow in Oatley Park but had not been reported from that area for many years. One junior member said that he had seen this plant growing locally and would guide Mr Constable to its location.

At this meeting, £4-13-0 (\$9.30) was raised by raffling the book "What Bird Is That?" which cost £1 (\$2). Tea money amounting to 10/6 (\$1.05) was also collected. The Society's minutes highlighted a problem with suppers. "*Due to the boisterous boys who gather around the tea table, Mrs Aynsley and Mrs Johnstone felt that something should be done as it is impossible to carry out the management of the supper without mishap. It was felt that if cordial was supplied for the children on a separate table away from the tea that this might alleviate the position. Mr Mitchell will make enquiries about purchasing cordial wholesale for about thirty children.*

Saturday, 6 October 1956 The Society's very first field day was an outing to Oatley Park. It was led by Gordon McKern, a plant ecologist from Wentworthville, and his son Howard, an expert on the classification of eucalypts. About 20 members explored the northern slopes of the park "where halts were made every few yards to identify and describe the plants and trees as they were encountered." Cups of tea awaited the party on arrival at the bottom of Mallard Drive. As a result of this outing, a list of trees and flowering plants of Oatley Park was drawn up, which is now an interesting historical document.

October J. Hersey of the Fauna Protection Panel showed films of animals which inhabit fauna reserves in N.S.W.

Meetings were held monthly mostly on Monday evenings at 8 pm. Speakers in 1957 were all experts in various fields of nature : a return of R. McKay with "Live Snakes and Lizards", Barbara Dew from CSIRO Fisheries Division at Cronulla, D. McAlpine (Australian Museum) on "Australian Insects", Mrs R.W. Rothwell (Ornithological Society) presenting "Bird Watching around Sydney", Paddy Pallin's "Films around Australia", Dr Allen Keast (Australian Museum) with "Astonishing Australian Birds and Animals", John Lake (NSW Fisheries) with "Trout Fishing in Australia", Thistle Stead with "Native Flowers" and Peter Roberts (Gould League of Bird Lovers) with "Birds and their Calls". The

March meeting on seashore life was followed by a Saturday seashore field day to Oak Park, Cronulla, led by Barbara Dew, and Peter Roberts followed up his talk with a bird field day in Royal National Park.

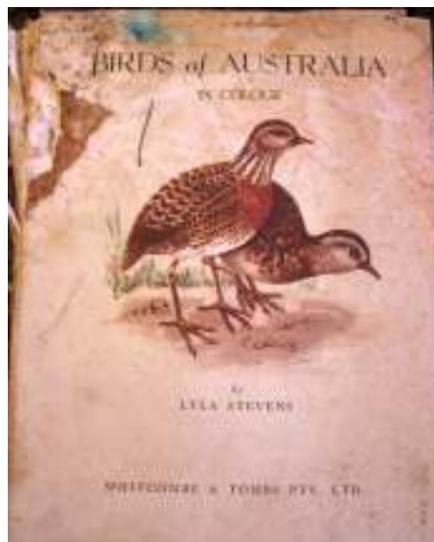
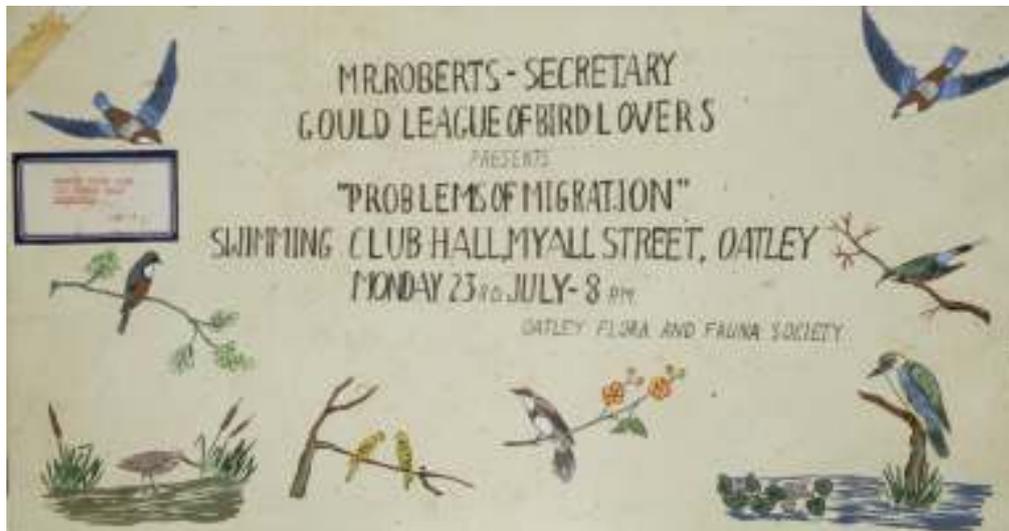
Seven well-known (almost legendary) naturalists headed the list of speakers in 1958. They were Joan Bradley (on blue wrens), Harold Cogger (on reptiles), Isobel Bennet (on seashores), Alex Blombery (on growing native plants), Norman Chaffer (on birds), Allen Strom (on geology) and Thistle Harris (on wildflowers). In August, 60 people attended a members' slide night, watching pictures of the Great Barrier Reef by George Dibley, Snowy Mountains by Cec Sainty, wildflowers by Rafael Kowron and New Guinea by Milton Way.

Membership fees were deliberately kept low to encourage more people to join. In 1958 the adult fee was increased to 3 shillings (30c). After some discussion, the junior fee was set at 1 shilling (10c) as it was felt that the Society "couldn't afford to lose any juniors...they are a very important part of our work because they will be the citizens of the future" (Doris Newbould).

By the end of 1959, there were 101 adult and 39 junior members of the Society. There had been 9 meetings that year with an average attendance of 50 adults and 13.5 juniors. The largest attendance for the year was 67 adults and 20 juniors. Four field days had been held in 1959, with an average attendance of 21.5 adults and 7.5 juniors. The year's profit was £2-6-5 (\$4.65), plus 8/7 (88c) bank interest. There was £17-16-4 (\$35.64) in the bank from previous years. Membership fees were raised to 6 shillings (60c) for adults and 2 shillings (20c) for juniors.



Posters for meetings in 1956 drawn by Denis Lane



Book prize presented by OFF, July 1956

Interview with Don McMinn, 7 February 2005

Don was a member of the six person steering committee of Oatley Flora and Fauna Society formed 30 November 1955 and member of the first elected committee in 1956. He and his wife Gwen live in Bay Road, West Oatley, adjacent to Oatley Park and overlooking Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands. He has lived in Bay Road for 80 years. His parents owned three big blocks extending down into the valley where the wetland now stand. The valley was then mostly cleared and used for grazing cattle, pigs and chickens. During the years of the Great Depression, he remembers playing in the bush, around the rocks of the valley and swimming in the "Devil's Hole", a pool so deep that the bottom could not be touched. This was near today's duck pond in the restored wetlands. The valley became public land as part of the County of Cumberland Green Belt program. Don was also involved in the fight to prevent the tipping of rubbish into Lime Kiln Bay in 1974.

"I belonged to the Progress Association, which was not getting much support. My neighbour, Mick Staples, agreed that the place was going to blazes and more needed to be done. He had heard of the conservation meeting at Rafe and Moyia Kowron's place and suggested we go along. We were in everything but a bath in those days. The feeling was that we would do anything to save Oatley. There were problems in Oatley Park, especially young people cutting down big trees at weekends just for fun, and lighting fires during the school holidays.

I became one of the Honorary Rangers for the park. We carried a card but had no real power and could only ask people politely not to damage things. One job we did was to kill the termites in trees on the edge of the park as they were coming out of the trees at night and heading for houses. Council gave us a box of white arsenic. We would climb up the tree, break the termite runs and pour the poison in. They were days when things were much simpler and we didn't know much. Another job I had was to be a judge at the Society's bird calling competitions. At one meeting I remember, I was not very popular with members as I had to give first prize to the son of some important local official. Kids then knew how to do good bird calls because they wandered in the bush a lot."

Conversation with Mrs Robin Allardice (nee McNamara), January 2005

“I clearly remember the OFF poster competition which I won in July 1956. It was run in association with a birdwatching excursion. My father and mother, Jack and Lorna McNamara, who were OFF members, took me along to a Society meeting in the old Swimming Club Hall at West Oatley. I think I was in 6th Class at the time. I still have my prize, a book “Birds of Australia in Colour”, by Lyla Stevens, published by Whitcombe and Tombs. Over subsequent years I used the illustrations in my work as an art teacher. The winning posters were displayed on the window of Mullane’s Chemist in Oatley West.”

Robin is the sister of Ian “Macca” McNamara, of ABC Radio’s *Australia All Over* fame. Although younger than his sister, Ian also remembers going with his family to OFF meetings at West Oatley. He especially recalls the bird calling competitions for younger children. Most, he remembers, were calls of birds like ravens and doves – at best, not very accurate, at worst, rather embarrassing. Bird imitation was something of a tradition in Oatley. Mrs Hilda Mason, of Mortdale, remembers a teacher of 4th Class, Miss McInerney, who trained a group of bird callers and would take them to Oatley Park to hear real birds. There was an annual competition run by the Gould League of Bird Lovers. One year the Oatley-Mortdale team went to Sydney University for judging and, having won, appeared at a concert at Sydney Town Hall.

The McNamara family have close ties with West Oatley, living first in Mi Mi Street and later in Oatley Park Avenue. Lorna McNamara’s father, Selwyn Probert, was a stonemason and champion rower who helped build the stone steps down to Oatley Park’s Sandy Bay Baths in late 1929. The steps were completed in January 1930.

Below Robin Allardice in February 2005 with book prize from 1956



Some memories of OFF in the 1950s

By MILTON WAY, committee member 1959 and 1960

OFF was formed by a concerned community, with regards to looking after the natural bush park [Oatley Park] we were so fortunate to have in Oatley West. The park was suffering to some extent from rubbish dumping, tree cutting and wildflower destruction. As the result of these early efforts by the OFF and others, the park has retained much of its original character to this day.

I had been in the Scouting Movement and always interested in the bush, bushcraft and bushwalking, hence when the OFF was formed more or less in my own backyard (I lived then in Burke Crescent, Oatley West), it seemed the right thing to join. In these early days (mid 1950s), we used to meet in the Swimming Club Hall on the corner of Myall St and Wonoona Pde. These meetings often consisted of a lecture or talk on the environment, i.e., wildflowers by such learned people as Thistle Y. Harris BSc. Also we went on day outings, such as bird watching at Rooty Hill in Sept '59 with Gordon Chaffer.

I recall being fortunate enough to have visited New Guinea in Dec '56-Jan '57- Mt Hagen Wahgi Valley – and being invited to show my slides of this then remote area in 1958.

Some of the people in the OFF that I recall :

Doris and Harry Newbould

Cec Sainty

George and Marie Dibley (George was one of the few people I knew in those days who owned an SLR camera, a Contax)

Hans and Beatrice Goldstein (They introduced me to small opera-style high quality binoculars for bird watching)

Wishing the OFF all the best for the future.

Milton Way, Yowie Bay 7-4-'05

EARLY YEARS OF THE SOCIETY

Recollections (Mar.2005) by June Lane, OFF Assistant Secretary 1959-1969

My son Denis and I attended OFF's second lecture "Some Australian Wild Flowers" by Thistle Harris on 27 Feb 1956. To get to this and subsequent meetings we walked from our home in Forest Road, Penshurst, to the Swimming Club Hall in Oatley West. Between 1957 and 1969, I was on the Committee with Doris and Harry Newbould, George Ringham, Cec Sainty and many others.

In the early years, we held committee meetings in one another's houses each month and ordinary meetings in the Swimming Club Hall, Myall Street, Oatley. We had a bush band, and a competition where pictures were cut out of magazines, like a collage, and you had to guess the name of the suburb. We played musical chairs and a paper bag

game. Two teams were formed and you had to blow up a paper bag and burst it, then run to the end of the line. Calendars were given as prizes. Lecturers included Thistle Harris "Flowers" [Sept 1957, Sept 1958, Sept 1959], Harold Cogger "Lizards and Snakes" [Mar 1958], Mr Dallimore "Tasmania" [Feb 1959], Mr Ellis McNamara "Mound-building Birds" [Mar 1959], John Waterhouse "Birds of the Mallee Areas" [July 1959] and Shell Films "Back of Beyond". On 23 October 1960 there was a Field Day with Ernie Wood who lived at Rooty Hill. In those days, the Windsor-Richmond area was wide open paddocks with tall trees and low growing shrubs. Ernie was a freak at finding birds' nests. He would wear old ragged clothes but it was reputed that he owned half of Rooty Hill.

A Library was started and some of the group were sworn in as Rangers to help the National Park rangers keep tabs on people picnicking in the park. Beatrice Goldstein and I did our stint in [Royal] National Park; the majority of people were friendly but we had a run in with one group of yobbos who had been drinking and did not want to take their "dead marines" with them. We insisted, but they probably threw them in the bush when we left.

In 1961, I was painting the posters to place in shop windows advertising the lectures to be given to the Society. Miss Snoor joined the Society [Dulcie Snoor, Committee member 1961-63]. We had field days with Harold Cogger at Waterfall looking for snakes and lizards; Marie and George Dibley bending over searching for minute orchids; Arnold McGill peering through binoculars into the greenery at birds hidden away; and, of course, Ernie Wood and Johnno Rhodes. Ernie would fire a stone attached to a string over a high branch with a catapult. He would then pull the string tied to a rope, tied to a ladder, up until the rope ladder reached the high branch. The end of the rope was tied to the bottom of the tree. Up he would climb and crawl along the branch to show us the eggs in a nest. If there were no side branches on the trunk of the tree, he would put both arms around the trunk and slide down. He was in his seventies and a great show-off. We loved it.

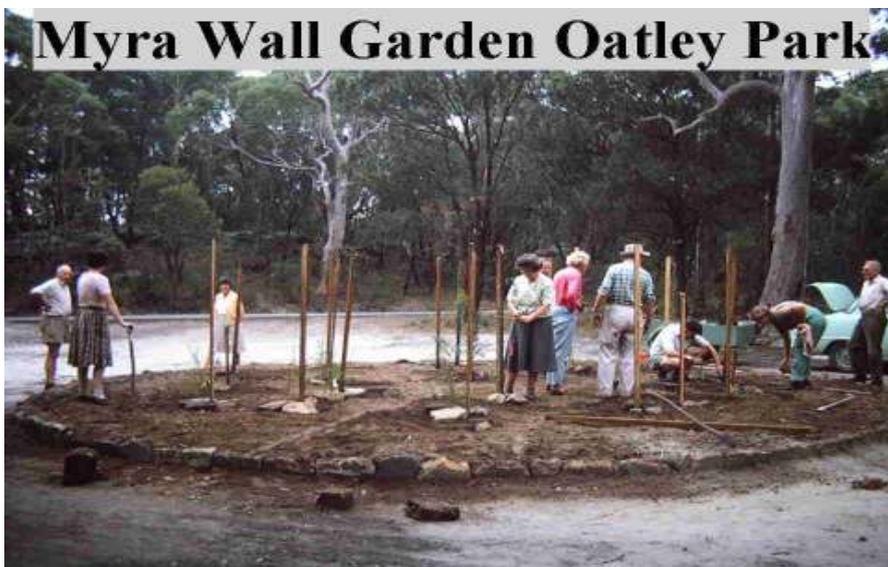
Members included Mary and Harry Elfick, John Elfick, Connie and Eddie Dalziel, Myra Wall, Hett and Will Bertram, Dolly and Doug McKee, Doris and Harry Newbould. Myra Wall died in 1963 and left more than two hundred pounds to the Society. In February 1964, we had a meeting and I suggested that her bequest should be recognised by naming the bed of native plants in Oatley Park after her. Hurstville Council had to approve the project. They did, and we had a working bee planting the garden. A plaque was set on 14 Aug 1965. It read "The Myra Wall Memorial Garden, 1964".

At the 1964 Christmas Party, my son Denis acted as M.C. Mr Grace, a talented old gentleman who went on all the Society's hikes, did bird calls with a whistle. He died on the 4th July 1966 at the age of 81 years. In Conservation Week, we set up a display at Roselands and took it in turns to be on duty. Hett and I had our turn and the display was very well received. I especially remember the meetings when the lecturer would bring a bag full of snakes to the hall and thrill the crowd by thrusting his hand in, grabbing a snake by the back of the head and lift it out, twisting and turning. By 1967, I was still Assistant Secretary and typed all the envelopes for the newsletters [which began in 1968]. Dr Albani, a lecturer in geology, gave us an inspiring lecture [22 May 1967] and a field day down the South Coast searching for fossilized brachypods. I resigned from the Committee in 1969. At the time, I was teaching art and craft at De La Salle, Revesby.

The Oatley Flora and Fauna opened up a wonderful world for Denis, Colleen and myself. The geology field days collecting specimens were especially memorable. One day at Prospect Quarry with the Ringhams, I took Les' hammer and chisel and belted pieces of rock that had holes in them looking for prinite, a green or pink quartz-like mineral. I was absolutely worn out when I arrived home and the chisel was at least ½ inch shorter. The Royal National Park was a very special place to visit. We always caught the train to the park and walked down the steep hill on a path to the river where the children played games and the adults identified the wild life.



Activities from 1964 – putting labels on trees in Royal National Park, Bird Outing and building the Myra Wall Garden in Oatley Park



Letter from NOELENE KIDD (Nee RUMSEY) of Moranbah, Qld.

24 April 2005

Our family was connected with the Flora and Fauna Society from the early days. We lived at No.3 Lloyd Street. With my father, John (Jack) Rumsey (widower) and my brother Douglas, I used to attend the meetings which were held in the Swimming Club Hall in Wonoona Parade. Probably, our white cat Manny, who had one blue eye and one green eye, also attended, as he often followed us when we walked at night. Manny the cat also attended Flix-for-Nix and ratepayers' meetings in the hall. Dad played the banjo in a small band for dances there, especially square dances, which raised money for the swimming club.

Dad painted the lane numbers on the sidewall at the western end of Sandy Beach for the swimming races. We often walked the track which began at the end of Douglas Haig Street to walk through the park to Little Sandy Beach for a swim.

One of the aims of the Society was to preserve the native species in Oatley Park. When I was a small child, Dad used to take me on afternoon walks either around Jewfish Point to see the new houses being built or through Oatley Park. I recall seeing masses of flannel flowers, "eggs and bacon" and bushes with spidery mauve flowers. We sometimes saw fringed violets. We would frequently come across the Park Ranger. He spoke of how vandals were coming into the park and pulling out the plants by the roots. Both of the adults were appalled at this behaviour. Perhaps this was one of the factors that stirred the local people to begin the Society.

A love of the native bush began in many at Oatley West Public School. When I started school, there was no school fence. We had bush for the bigger portion of the playground and we played amongst the native flowers, refusing to come back to the classrooms when we heard the end-of-lunch bell. One day I slipped over in the mud when chasing someone between the bushes and had to go home to change out of my muddy clothes. On another occasion, Max Gilroy fell out of a tree and broke his knee. Eventually they opened up Dame Mary Gilmore Drive and the school was fenced and, as they needed more space, the bush was cleared.

We had various speakers at the Flora and Fauna Society meetings which were announced by means of posters placed in Mullane's Chemist on the corner of Mulga Road and Myall Street. In the days before computers, they came up with an easy method of making the posters. They were pre-printed with the name of the Society, meeting place and contact details on large sheets of white paper about 25x30 inches (probably copied in a drawing office or architect's office). Space was left for the speaker's name, topic and date. My brother, Douglas, and I would sometimes make up the posters under Dad's supervision. Jack was excellent at lettering having worked as a linotype operator on a Sydney newspaper before WW2. I remember that Doug copied

and painted pictures of birds on to the posters as well as the lettering. To keep the lettering straight, we'd draw fine pencil lines, then write in the lettering with poster paint, and when the paint dried we'd rub out the guidelines. I recall that one of the posters I painted had the subject title "Leaping Lizards" in bright red paint.

Doug still loves native birds and often has his binoculars nearby in his home in Longreach. On a trip in the Atherton Tablelands in 1973, he was driving and looking up "What Bird is That?" at the same time as we drove around narrow curves.

I hope these reminisces of the fifties in Oatley are of interest to your members. With best wishes for your celebrations.....

CHAPTER 3 CONSOLIDATION IN THE 1960s

In 1960, the Kowrons retired from the committee; their young family required more of their attention and they had less time to devote to Society work. In 1959 Doris Newbould became Hon. Secretary. She remained in that position until 1967 and on the committee until 1971. Dr Edwin Dalziel was Hon. Treasurer from 1959 to 1967. Both were typical of a new group of committee workers who served for extended periods and gave the Society its stability. Other long-term committee members in the 1960s were Beatrice Goldstein (Minutes Secretary and Publicity Officer, 1960-70), Cec Sainty (President, 1959-62, Vice-president, 1963-67), A.E.(Bert) Hayes (Vice-president, 1960-65, President, 1966-67), June Lane (Assistant Secretary, 1959-69) and Bill Keech (committee member 1965, Vice-president, 1966-70). But it was Ida Carder who had the longest period of serving the Society at this time, joining the committee in 1966, Hon. Secretary from 1972-82 and remaining on the committee until 1991, a total of 26 years. This record was later eclipsed by Val Boyan who was on the committee from 1970 to 2002, a period of 33 years.

Two major threats to the environmental values of Oatley Park surfaced in the 1960s. They were a proposal for an "all-tide" swimming pool at Oatley Baths and a Council plan for a road across Lime Kiln Bay from the Park to Peakhurst which was to be the first stage of the infilling of Lime Kiln Bay to create sports fields. Both proposals were opposed vigorously by the Society.

Fortunately, neither went ahead and the Park's bushland values and its beautiful mangrove-lined fringes were preserved.

The plan for an upgraded swimming pool at Sandy Beach in Oatley Park was put forward in early 1961 by the Oatley Amateur Swimming Club. It required that two or more walls should enclose a section of the existing tidal pool to make it an Olympic pool in size and the bottom to be concreted. The estimated cost was \$12,000. Other suggestions included the installation of a filtration pump and improvements to facilities costing \$100,000. OFF expressed its concern about the additional parking required and the encroachments on to park land. Society representatives expressed their views at All-tide Pool meetings and through letters to Hurstville Council and the Lands Department. Alternative park sites for the Olympic pool were suggested – it could be built at the children's playground or between the oval and the playground where 1.2 hectares of bushland would have to be cleared. A Council report, dated 24 January 1962, rejected the pool proposal. However, it was still in discussion until 1966. Public interest had waned by late 1964 when only three people attended a pool meeting. The final nail was hammered into its coffin in September 1966 when, after a petition organized by OFF and signed by 1123 people, the Lands Department advised Hurstville Council that it opposed the pool proposal.

Just as this threat dissolved, another on a grander scale was being proposed. Between February and June 1964 Hurstville Council's plans for Lime Kiln Bay gradually emerged. The bay was to be filled by dumping rubbish up to 30 feet (9 metres) deep to create sports fields and an extension of the nearby golf course. A roadway was to be built across a causeway from Oatley Park to Lorraine Street, Peakhurst, providing a direct route through the park and an entrance into the new sports fields. This roadway was the reincarnation of a similar plan from the early 1930s, which had long since been abandoned. A start was made constructing the causeway.

Appalled at the imminent loss of one of the few remaining natural bays along the Georges River and its obvious threat to the tranquillity of the park, protests began from local residents and OFF. The importance of mangroves to the river's ecology was stressed. The Conservation Officer for the Education Department, Allen Strom, was invited to visit the area and he emphasised the value of the bay for ecological studies by school students. In July

1969, a petition containing hundreds of signatures against the proposed filling was organized by Arnold Bryden, then Society Treasurer [see boxed text]. By the end of the decade, the reclamation work had not begun but it was still under consideration. A new round of this fight was to begin in 1972 when Hurstville Council started to fill the northern arm of Lime Kiln Bay with garbage.

Despite the work load involved in opposing the threats to local parks and bays, the Society was involved in numerous other activities in the 1960s. In keeping with its stress on educating about the environment, some local trees were labelled with names on metal plates. In March 1960, a sum of £3 (\$6) was approved by the committee to buy galvanised iron. Bert Hayes was to cut it into suitable sized pieces, Heinz Goldstein was to paint them green and Susan Heins would do the sign writing in white lettering. At first, trees in Oatley Park were labelled and in 1963 some in Oatley Pleasure Grounds were also labelled. Later, a number of trees in Royal National Park had their names attached firmly to their trunks. Bill Keech painted "Birds of this area" on a number of steel plates and nailed them to trees in Royal National Park, Centennial Park and Oatley Pleasure Grounds. Larger signs were painted and erected in Oatley Park with messages such as "No fires except in fireplaces" and "No littering".

In 1960, a Society library was established. Books on relevant natural history subjects were purchased from time to time for borrowing by members at meetings. This library continued for 25 years until the books were presented to Hurstville Library and dedicated as the Miles Dunphy Memorial collection.

In 1964 and 1965 much time and effort was spent in completing a "flower bed for the show of native plants" in Oatley Park. Approval was given in August 1964 by Hurstville Council to erect a bronze plate to mark this as the Myra Wall Memorial Garden (The garden was named in recognition of a bequest by an OFF member, Miss Wall, to the Society of £276-18-3 (\$553.84) in late 1963). Vandals subsequently stole the plate and many of the native plants were damaged or removed, but the circular garden remained. The ashes of Myra Wall and Doris Newbould were buried in this garden following their deaths. A plaque erected to mark the latter event was also stolen. As part of the Society's 50th Anniversary celebrations, Hurstville City Council agreed to the re-building of this garden and on 7 December 2005 (50 years to the day since the

Society was named) a group of members replanted the garden with appropriate indigenous plants.

The Society continued its efforts to attract and involve junior members. In 1966 an art competition was held for primary school students. Entries, which were to feature Australian plants or animals, were exhibited in Oatley Primary School and the Mayor of Hurstville, Ald. H. Cable, opened the exhibition and presented the prizes. Miss Karen Freeman won \$10 for the best picture.

The protection of Oatley Park remained of prime concern to the Society. In 1966-67, OFF protested to the Lands Department over proposals to build a second oval in the park. Issues such as vandalism, speeding cars, the need for more rangers and closing the park at night all received attention. In 1968-69 there was a proposal to build a huge marina off Jewfish Point projecting 76 metres into the Georges River. As no parking was available near the marina, boat owners were to park their cars in Oatley Park and be ferried across to the marina by the proprietor. A private telephone was to be established on the wharf near the swimming baths so potential customers could phone the marina. As improbable as it sounds, permission was actually granted by Hurstville Council, but after numerous protests, Council later changed its opinion and opposed the proposal. Near the end of the decade, in November 1969, OFF expressed concern about Hurstville Council's policy of frequent burning off in Oatley Park, a problem which continued for 30 years until a Fire Management Policy was drawn up by Council.

In February 1968, Beatrice Goldstein produced the first edition of *OFF News*. It replaced the former monthly notice. This enabled the Society to give a summary of its conservation actions as well as "*news of happenings in our own small world.*" This first edition contained a report on the wood chip industry in the Northern Territory, and opposition to the flooding of Lake Peddar in Tasmania and mining leases at Coolong Caves. Beatrice's comment on these still holds true today : "*The more public opinion is roused over the plundering of reserved areas, the better.*" There was also a note about State Cabinet's approval of legislation to control water pollution in N.S.W. Coming Events were a talk with pictures entitled "A New Approach to Bird Photography" by Donald Trounson, followed by a bird field day led by Athol

Colemane to bushland near Scheyville and the lagoons around Pitt Town.

OFF News became a regular monthly news sheet. Articles in this newsletter reflected the widening field of interest and concern of Society members. Issues outside the local area were becoming prominent. It was realised that to preserve plants and animals, their habitat must be preserved and that co-operation with other like-minded bodies was essential. Early editions of *OFF News* had articles on the newly formed National Parks and Wildlife Service (March 1968), the Australian Conservation Foundation (April 1968) and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (May 1968). Speakers were invited to address the meeting on such subjects as rainforests, mangroves, national parks, whaling and sand mining. Delegates were sent to other meetings and conferences. The Society supplied speakers to other groups, organized Earth Week displays annually at Roselands and gave assistance to students who asked for help with environmental projects. As if to acknowledge that the Society had grown beyond its narrow local concerns and had matured as a group, the name of the Society was changed at the Annual Meeting of January 1967 to include the word "Conservation".

LETTER FROM ERIC WHEELER **SOCIETY PRESIDENT 1963-65**

Our association with Oatley F & F started in 1959. Margaret and I went to a wildflower exhibition at the Sydney Town Hall which I think was part of the Waratah Festival, where we picked up a pamphlet about Oatley F & F. We were newly married and building a house at Miranda surrounded by bushland full of birds and wildflowers, so we contacted Mrs Newbould (we never called her Doris), joined Oatley F & F and were members until 1971 when we moved to Grafton. I was president from 1963 to 1965. Mrs Newbould was a wonderful secretary. She was a lady of great persuasion, ensuring that all the top people from their fields spoke at our meetings or led us on our field days.

Our own members also showed their talents. People like Cec Sainty and Bert Hayes led us on field days and the Dibleys were regular speakers at meetings. At that time, George and Marie [Dibley] were relative newcomers to birdwatching but with a vast background of bushwalking and plant identification. Members night gave our people a chance to give a short talk on their interests and adventures ranging from the Dibleys speaking on "What is an Orchid?" or Bill Keech talking about grevilleas to Ron Mellor telling us about his time as a crocodile shooter. The year's activities were rounded off

with a family Christmas Party and, true to form, Mrs Newbould one year managed to get the well-known folk singer Alex Hood and his band to entertain us. We had a marvellous night and afterwards Mrs Newbould, ever mindful of our limited funds, tried to re-negotiate the fee because the band arrived with one fewer musician than expected.

At the time I was teaching at Jannali Boys High and I managed to get some pupils interested in bird-banding which was an improvement on their previous egg collecting. Three of them became interested in birdwatching and joined our club as junior members, attending many meetings and field days. Some years later Margaret was a bit concerned when a motorcyclist rode into our driveway. The bikie then came to our front door and introduced himself as one of the boys who used to come to Oatley F & F and said he was now “into butterflies”.

One activity of the Club was the labelling of trees in Royal National Park. On one occasion, however, another group must also have been interested in identifying trees there because we found, nailed to a tree below our sign, a crudely painted sign announcing that the tree was not the species as identified by us, but a different species. Cec Sainty was not amused.

On two occasions the Club held weekend camps. The first was at Barren Grounds Faunal Reserve where we arrived a day earlier than the other campers. That night we experienced a gale that terrified our young children and caused Margaret to wonder whether she and the kids should be driven immediately to the station to go home by train. The next camp was a delightful weekend at Pebbly Beach on the south coast. We went on walks during the day and all sat around a campfire at night and socialized.

When Mrs Newbould found that Margaret had worked in a drawing office, she was given the job of preparing the posters for the meetings. For every poster she painted a watercolour illustrating the topic of the lecture. She made two posters each month, one being displayed at Oatley railway station and the other one being put into a shop window in Oatley. Another activity that I was involved in was for members to give talks illustrated by slides (using the Club's own projector) to groups wishing to form similar clubs, such as in the Sutherland Shire, to other conservation societies all over Sydney and to other organizations such as Scouts. The Club was also instrumental in the local Council presenting a native plant to each new citizen at Naturalisation ceremonies. We have continued our interest in flora and fauna which was started with our involvement at Oatley and we hope that many people in the future may come to appreciate the natural environment through membership of Oatley Flora and Fauna Society.

Eric and Margaret Wheeler, Grafton, July 2006



Field Day 1960s (1 November 1964?). Birdwatching to Rooty Hill led by Ernie Wood (seated back row, fourth from left). Paddy McKenzie front left.



1965. Christmas party, with Doris Newbould



1971 Earth Day display at Roselands. Ida Carder 2nd from right, Nes Grundy right

CHAPTER 4 1970s : BATTLE FOR THE BAYS

The 1970s saw major impacts on the bays along the Oatley section of the Georges River with the natural beauty and environmental values of these waterways and wooded foreshores altered forever by the short-sightedness of both Hurstville and Kogarah Councils. Lime Kiln Bay and the north-western arm of Oatley Bay (Moore Reserve) were seen by Councils as cheap and convenient areas for the disposal of rubbish and the north-eastern arm of Oatley Bay (Poulton Park) was partly covered in dredged silt. Despite the protests of many groups, including OFF, the bays were eventually filled, flattened, grassed and converted to playing fields and a golf course. Only the eastern arm of Lime Kiln Bay survived intact, to become, ironically, a jewel in the crown for Hurstville Council's regeneration and river protection efforts, with \$1.2 million being spent on a massive wetland rehabilitation project in the year 2000. Kogarah Council also developed a belated interest in wetlands, constructing a Mangrove Boardwalk in Poulton Park (with input from OFF and funding from Coastcare) and a wetlands system in Moore Reserve, both in 2001.

LIME KILN BAY

In 1971, Hurstville Council applied to the State Planning Authority to tip household rubbish into Gungah Bay and Jew Fish Bay and in October 1972 it began the filling of the northern arm of Lime Kiln Bay in what became known as Roberts Avenue Garbage Tip. By late 1973, fears were being held for the eastern arm of Lime Kiln Bay when it seemed that the healthy mangrove and reed beds there were to be also covered with rubbish. To combat this threat, the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee was formed, in which many OFF members were directly involved. This Committee's first President was John Blacker (later OFF Vice-president, 1976-77, and President, (1978-86) and its Secretary/Publicity Officer was David Koffel (an OFF committee member). Other OFF members on the committee were Tricia Koffel, Julian Sheen and Ruth Staples.

Objections were lodged with the State Pollution Control Commission, petitions were collected opposing the reclamation and local groups vigorously campaigned for the scheme to be abandoned. In February 1974, it was announced that Council would make a "full environmental impact study of the Lime Kiln Bay area". This would help Council engineers to "determine the extent of the bay reclamation". Although this study temporarily

halted the infilling, Council seemed determined to proceed with the tip.

Hurstville Council's Draft Planning Scheme was placed on public display on 5 July 1976. Local residents were astonished to see that Council proposed to destroy the natural qualities of four river bays – Gungah Bay, Jew Fish Bay, the eastern arm of Lime Kiln Bay and two lengths of the foreshore of Salt Pan Creek. The objections increased. On 17 August, seventy residents met to discuss the new plan and unanimously agreed to form a new community action group, called POW (Preserve Oatley West Resident Action). POW called the foreshore tipping a disgrace and warned of the dangers of future pollution and the escape of leachate if the rubbish dumping went ahead.

The dispute was a classic conflict between “improvement” and “preservation”, between short-term economic gains and long-term community values. Alderman Dick Swanton expressed the majority view of Hurstville Council when he said :

“Council has to dispose of garbage somewhere. By reclaiming sections of Lime Kiln Bay, Council was providing new amenities for ratepayers. We are not destroying the environment. We are creating a new and more pleasing and useful environment. Instead of swampy sections of the bay, there will be an 18-hole golf course and areas of playing fields.”

Ald Swanton also criticised the parish newsletter of St Peter's Anglican Church, Mortdale, which, in an article under the heading “Take a Walk and See for Yourself”, commented adversely on Council's tipping at Lime Kiln Bay. The article implied that Hurstville Council had acted in an irresponsible manner in continuing its tipping program. Ald Swanton, obviously unsympathetic and unresponsive to deep community concern, said that it was ridiculous that a parish paper should enter council politics on a matter that did not directly affect the church. (*The Leader*, 28-8-1974)

The Preservation Committee's view was that this area had to be preserved in its natural condition as it was part of Oatley's unique character and important to the ecology of the river. The proposed tip would seriously affect property values, threaten the oyster industry, cause future pollution and have an adverse effect on the wetland birds. Moreover, there were alternative means of garbage

disposal, including incineration, compacting, recycling and transportation to Menai.

Although the northern arm of Lime Kiln Bay was lost to garbage filling, the protest action had the effect of delaying the destruction of the other bays in Hurstville Municipality. When the Metropolitan Waste Disposal Authority's regional tip at Lucas Heights began taking garbage, the pressure on the bays was eased and they remain today in their natural condition for all to enjoy.

This success was not duplicated on the eastern side of Oatley where wetlands and adjoining bushland at Poulton Park and Moore Reserve were destroyed by Kogarah Council.

THE LEADER, 13 Feb. 1974

New bid to halt tip at Oatley bay

ST. GEORGE PICTORIAL, 13 Feb 1974

MP JOINS FIGHT ON TIP PROPOSAL

Preservationists fighting to halt rubbish dumping in Lime Kiln Bay have gained the support of Federal Member for Barton, Mr. L. J. Reynolds.

The Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee has lodged a second objection with the State Pollution Control Commission against Hurstville Council's Lime Kiln Bay reclamation project.

The objection is based on claims that the natural bushland and mangrove bays are endangered.

Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee claimed increased support for its campaign to prevent the tipping of rubbish into the bay by the council to reclaim mangrove areas.

Committee secretary Mr D. Koffel believes council intended to turn the estu-

rine area and natural bushland into a rubbish tip which would extend along Lime Kiln Bay, below Bay Road up to about Short Street, Oatley.

"We now have the support of other conservation groups in the area," Mr Koffel said.

The committee has asked Mr Reynolds to make representations to the Australian Minister for Urban and Regional Development, Mr Uren, for a waste processing plant for the St George area.

Mr Reynolds said he strongly supported the committee's campaign to preserve the environment of the area in its best possible condition.

I hope it will not be

necessary for council to run the risk of despoiling Lime Kiln Bay," Mr Reynolds said.

"I will support the committee's representations to Mr Uren in their efforts to obtain financial aid to provide an incinerator for the effective disposal of waste.

"I sympathise with councils who have not the resources to provide proper waste disposal and often against their own inclination have to dump rubbish in unsatisfactory areas."

Mr Koffel said: "Once Lime Kiln Bay is completed, we fear other bays may be reclaimed.

"It is the natural bushland which makes Oatley a distinctive suburb."

Support

Mr. Reynolds wrote in reply:

"I strongly support your committee's campaign to do all possible to preserve the environment of our area in the best possible condition."

"I should hope that it will not be necessary for council to run the risk of despoiling the bay."

"Be assured that I will be only too happy to support your representations you have made to my colleague, Mr. Uren, in an effort to obtain from the Australian Government sources the kind of financial help that might assist in providing an incinerator similar to that established in the Eastern Suburbs for the effective disposal of waste."

"I heartily sympathise, of course, with local councils who have not the resources to provide such amenities and, often against their own inclinations, have to dump rubbish in unsatisfactory areas."

"It could well be that the Australian Government proposed grants to the Local Government bodies will make it possible for a project such as this, to be carried out."

"A prerequisite to this happening, though, was that various local councils would have to agree to get together to establish a regional group to get such Commonwealth funds."

Welcomed

"I will be only too happy to press the matter with the Minister seeing that so many people of my own electorate are involved."

In welcoming the letter, Mr. Koffel pointed out that the filling in of the bay was not an isolated incident.

"Hurstville Council in 1971 also applied to the State Planning Authority to tip rubbish into Gungah Bay and Jewish Bay on the Oatley foreshores of Georges River and into Edith Bay and Lugarno foreshores," Mr. Koffel said.

"It is very disturbing and for this reason we have lodged a second objection with the State Pollution Control Commission about the Bay reclamation scheme," he said.

"Oatley must be kept green."

The Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee has lodged a second objection with the State Pollution Control Commission to Hurstville Council's "reclamation" project for the bay.

The objection was that natural bushland was endangered.

The committee also claimed increased support from residents for its campaign to prevent the tipping of rubbish into the bay by council.

Council intends to turn the estuarine area and natural bushland into a rubbish tip that would extend along the bay below Bay Road, up to about Short Street, Oatley.

"The collection of signatures for our petition has been slow, but hundreds of people have already signed and responses to our house-to-house callers has been most gratifying," secretary, Mr. D. Koffel, said.

"In addition, we have the support of other conservation groups in the area."

Mr. Koffel also released the text of a letter the committee had received from the local Federal Member, Mr. L. Reynolds.

The committee had asked Mr. Reynolds to make representations to the Federal Minister for Urban and Regional Development (Mr. Uren) for a waste processing plant in the St. George area.

WASTE DUMP STUDY



BULLDOZERS dump garbage in the upper reaches of Lime Kiln Bay.

A full environment, impact study will be made of Lime Kiln Bay area.

The study to be made by officers of Hurstville Council, will take four weeks.

The upper reaches of the bay are used for garbage disposal which has prompted heavy criticism from the newly formed Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee.

Council has reclaimed sections of the bay with garbage since October 1972. Playing field and a golf course will be built on the reclaimed land.

Council's impact study being conducted by senior officers of the engineer's department will determine the extent of the bay reclamation.

Council engineer, Mr. E. A. Anderson, said the reclamation study would be discussed with State Government departments including the Fisheries and Planning and Environment.

Committee critical of council

Ald. D. Swanton said too many people were becoming over-sensitive about pollution.

"Council has to dispose of garbage somewhere", he said.

"By reclaiming sections of Lime Kiln Bay council was providing new amenities for ratepayers.

"We are not destroying the environment. We are creating a new and more pleasing and useful environment.

"Instead of the swampy sections of Lime Kiln Bay there will be an 18-hole golf course and areas of playing fields."

President of the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee, Mr. J. Blacker, said the Lime Kiln Bay area supported unique bird life and natural flora.

"The council does not seem to consider the value of natural mangrove and bushland compared with treeless playing fields," Mr. Blacker said.

The committee is seeking the support of the NSW Pollution Control Commission, the Fisheries Board, and the Planning and Environment Department to halt the reclamation of the bay.

Above : Article from The Pictorial Newspaper, 27 February 1974

RESIDENTS ARGUE CASE AT COUNCIL

The Municipal Engineer (Mr E. L. Anderson) with the aid of aerial maps outlined in detail at last week's Hurstville Council meeting what council was planning for Lime Kiln Bay.

"In fact, we are about 10 years ahead of nature in reclaiming this part of the bay," Mr Anderson said.

"Gradual silting will eventually close the area," he said.

Mr. David Thorp, of the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee told council that he did not agree with the statement that there was no wildlife in the area.

"Oatley is a nice area because of natural bush-land," Mr. Thorp said. "We are not trying to attack council. We only want to preserve the bush."

Ald. Croot: "But what is an alternative? Have you thought of what the ultimate end, without tipping, might be? Have you any idea of the cost involved in other means of garbage disposal?"

Mr. Thorp said that other members of the committee more qualified would be submitting suggestions.

Mr. David Koffel said that the State Pollution Control Commission had said in a letter that council should not pursue tipping.

"Council is faced with a dilemma and you can only salvage what you can," Mr. Koffel said.

"What is wrong with a shredder?"

"All I am asking is a decision that takes into consideration the feelings of residents," he said.

The Mayor (Ald. Cur-lisa) said investigations had shown that a shredding machine was too expensive.

"Apart from that, you

still have to dispose of bales of shredded garbage," he said.

Mr. Norman Tonkin said a Water Board report indicated that pollution was killing the Georges River.

"The loss of mangroves will be a disaster unless some form of tidal pond was incorporated," Mr. Tonkin said.

The engineer (Mr. Anderson) said this was being done by the formation of cells as tipping progressed.

Mr. Alan Fairly said the bay was a natural spot for bird breeding. "Once the mangroves go, bird life will become non-existent," he said.

Aid needed

Mr. K. Wilcox agreed with Mr. Walker that State and Federal aid was necessary.

"I will put pressure on you as a council. I expect you to put pressure on the State Government and Federal Member to find a solution," he said.

Ald. A. Lawrance said he had represented council on special committee with Bankstown to investigate garbage disposal.

"One scheme could be done only by a joint venture — and I am talking in terms of millions of dollars.

"Land filling is the only solution. No matter what you investigate, you go round in circles and always come back to land filling," he said.

Ald. Swanton said a recent tour of the bay confirmed his opinion that there was no danger to wildlife.

"There is no life there at all, a couple of birds, maybe, but that's all," he said.

"For the life of me I can't see what council will disrupt there.

"Apart from that, the eastern arm is a definite fire hazard.

"And I am certainly not a vandal.

"Why should a small, parochial group of residents be considered before the interests of 68,000 rate-payers?" Ald. Swanton asked.

Ald. E. H. Waudby said that he and other aldermen had been criticised as vandals.

"I resent that. I don't think we are," he said.

Ald. F. A. Verdon said he thought it was a question for the State Government.

Ald. J. R. Walsh agreed that it was an issue for the State Government.

"It is about time that State members, including Mr. Walker, got off their backsides and showed a bit of statesmanship themselves," Ald. Walsh said.

After the meeting a member of the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee said they faced a losing battle.

"We were up against a stacked deck tonight," he said. "I felt we presented a fair case."

Council will now debate the issue in open council, probably at the next meeting tomorrow night.

SCARE OVER HOME

VALUES

Lime Kiln Bay dump shelved

St. George area real estate experts have predicted a steep slide in property values in the Lime Kiln Bay district if Hurstville Council turns part of it into a rubbish dump.

They say that some properties will be almost impossible to sell while others will suffer a 20 per cent drop in value if the dump is established.

Their opinions are contained in the findings of a survey released this week by the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee.

"Opinions varied but all were unanimous that during the period of tipping, which the council estimates would be about five years, properties adjacent to the tip would be drastically reduced in market value," said the committee's president, Mr. John Blacker.

"One disturbing opinion was that the higher the value of the property, the greater the drop in price."

Release of the report coincided with Hurstville Council's decision — welcomed by the preservation committee — to make a full environmental impact study of the Lime Kiln Bay area.

Council had intended to convert the northern and eastern arms of Lime Kiln

Bay into a rubbish dump which would eventually extend along Bay Road to Short Street, beneath Beaumaris Road.

Impact study

"The decision to shelve the plan in lieu of the environmental study came after the preservation committee had vigorously campaigned for the abandoning of the scheme altogether.

"We are confident that the study will vindicate the protests of residents of the Oatley-Mortdale Heights area," Mr.

Blacker said yesterday.

"It was council's responsibility all along to undertake this study, and we have merely prodded it into accepting that responsibility."

Committee secretary, Mr. David Koffel, said a letter had been sent to the Municipal Employees Union seeking its support against council.

The letter said: "If your members objected to the proposal of council our committee believes that it would be extremely difficult for council to pursue its plans, and that a unique

area of the south western suburbs could be saved."

On the question of property values, the real estate survey found that homes within a couple of streets of the proposed tip would be affected as much as those adjacent to it.

Opinions on the drop in value ranged from five per cent to 15 per cent, depending — as one expert stated — "on wind direction and strength of smell", the committee said.

"All were of the opinion that the Oatley image of natural bushland would be damaged in the eyes of the buying public for a prolonged period, possibly up to 10 years.

"This would affect all property in the suburb, and not just that adjacent to Lime Kiln Bay.

"Families who had to leave the area for various reasons in that period of time would be financially handicapped through no fault of their own," said Mr. Blacker.

"That is why we have written to council asking their advice on what steps they intend to take to compensate homeowners who will inevitably be placed in this position."

LIME KILN BAY

Petition to keep Lime Kiln Bay and its mangrove swamps in their natural state...Oatley Park. July 1969

We, the undesigned, humbly beg the Mayor and the Councillors of Hurstville Municipality not to proceed with the reclamation of the Lime Kiln Bay swamp area in Oatley West with the dumping of rubbish and filling.

We understand from information supplied by the N.S.W. Department of Fisheries that this area supplies food and protection for as very large number of fish during part of their life cycle. The loss of this habitat will only result in a considerable decrease in the fish population. Also that the swamp helps to prevent silting of the Georges River. A large number of native birds make use of the area and it provides a study area for local schools.

We beg that the above area be awarded the same protection as Oatley Park.

(740 signatures were gained in one weekend)

An appeal by Arnold and Phyl Bryden, 5 Feb 1974

About five years ago when news was first heard that the Hurstville Council would fill in Lime Kiln Bay with rubbish, a petition protesting to the Council

against this project was circulated during one weekend and over 700 signatures were obtained. These signatures included nearly all of the residents who reside within the precincts of Lime Kiln Bay. Many other people signed whose addresses were outside of this area: some of whom were visiting and lived in the far west.

The result of this activity was a meeting in Oatley Park between the following ...the Mayor of Hurstville...Mr Pontin of the National Parks and Wildlife and a representative of the State Fisheries Department ... plus Mrs Goldstein of the Oatley Flora and Fauna. I was told by Mrs Goldstein later that it had been agreed that the Council would be allowed to fill both arms of Lime Kiln Bay....provided that the mangrove area was not harmed.

A line was drawn on a map at right angles to Oatley Heights across both arms...roughly in line with Dame Mary Gilmore Drive ...which defined the limits of the rubbish dumping. At the meeting the Mayor of Hurstville said that the petition was of little import and did not reflect local opinion.

As rubbish dumping is now in progress on the western arm, I consider that this arm is now lost. However, I feel certain that the seepage from the tip and the storm water pipe underneath it would prove detrimental to the marine life in the bay and the dumping of rubbish should be stopped.

I appeal to the members of Oatley Flora and Fauna to do all they can to save the eastern arm. The eastern arm, apart from providing a corridor for many kinds of bird life, also possesses a large area of reeds and swamp which do not occur elsewhere in or near the environs of Oatley Park. We claim therefore that it is essential to retain the eastern arm in its natural state to supplement Oatley Park. My wife and I urge that members support an appeal to the Hurstville Council to save the eastern arm of Lime Kiln Bay.

LIME KILN BAY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE & P.O.W.

from notes, minutes and correspondence summarised by David Koffel

The State Government had approved the reclamation of Lime Kiln Bay in April 1971 and in the following year Hurstville Council begun filling the north arm of the bay with garbage. Upon the discovery of surveyors' pegs across Lime Kiln Bay in November 1973, which seemed to mark the start of the destruction of the eastern arm of the bay, local residents David and Tricia Koffel, Ruth Staples and her son Lewis formed the nucleus of the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee (LKBPC) and began to collect signatures from those opposing the reclamation. The Committee soon expanded and was formalised. It consisted of : John Blacker (President), David Koffel (Secretary/Publicity), Ruth Staples, David Thorp, Eric

Doldissen, Julian Sheen and Tricia Koffel. Phyl Bryden gave invaluable advice and assistance.

Support and signatures increased. At first, OFF was cautious about the campaign. Ida Carder (OFF Publicity Officer) argued that OFF didn't want to see the bay destroyed but recognised that there was a problem with garbage disposal. The Council had compromised on its original proposal, and the Health Dept had given it the OK. The Society (for the moment) reluctantly accepted the assurances of the Dept of Fisheries which had endorsed the plan and had set conditions which included that filling was to be limited to above the high water mark. By Feb/Mar 1974, OFF had changed its mind and gave LKBPC its cautious support. The Committee's aims were also supported by local politicians, Len Reynolds MHR and Frank Walker MLA.

From Jan 1974, the long term goals of LKBPC were to establish a tidal ponds system as envisaged by Norm Tonkin, to incorporate the wetlands of Lime Kiln Bay into Oatley Park, to establish a picnic area in the upper part of the eastern arm, to carry out regeneration work and to encourage alternative means of rubbish disposal, such as recycling.

Correspondence and press releases continued. A 1200 signature petition was presented to Council (30-4-74). Council released an unsatisfactory report on 4 June. From 14 June, the Committee involved itself in the Local Municipal Elections to be held in Sept 1974 with leaflets encouraging people to vote for the environment, trying to influence pre-selections and proposing a candidate, David Thorp. There was excellent TV publicity when, on 5 July, Tricia Koffel was interviewed in Lime Kiln Bay and Jean Burg in a boat on the bay. Oatley West P&C declared their support for LKBPC.

Frank Walker (MLA) attacked the Council's "Environment Report " (a study of the reclamation of the bay) and on 25 July 1974 chaired a special meeting with Council attended by representatives of LKBPC and OFF. In attendance were David Thorp, David Koffel, John Blacker, Norm Tonkin, Kevin Wilcox, Eric Doldissen, Alan Fairley (then OFF President) and Ida Carder. The meeting called on Council to incorporate Lime Kiln Bay and Oatley Heights into Oatley Park, establish a permanent Consultative Committee of 4 Councillors and 4 LKBPC/OFF members, extend the life time of northern arm tip, encourage more recycling and retain the bushland area as a buffer zone between Oatley Park and residential areas. Norm Tonkin described to Council officers the feasibility of a ponding system for the upper reaches of the bay. Subsequently (on 10 August), the Committee

sought clarification from Council on the legal status of the three sections of Lime Kiln Bay – Oatley Heights, the wetlands and Bay Road Reserve.

In Aug/Sept 1974, the Metropolitan Waste Disposal Authority (MWDA) announced a plan to establish a regional depot at Lucas Heights, a 809 ha site with a 20 year capacity. By November the MWDA had instructed Hurstville Council to stop tipping into Lime Kiln Bay. There followed a hiatus of five months, but Council was still resolved to continue with reclamation.

28 Feb 1975 LKBPC requested Council to consider a number of proposals regarding Lime Kiln Bay and Oatley Park. It asked for a new wire fence across the peninsula from Jew Fish Bay to Lime Kiln along Dame Mary Gilmore Road, traffic signs at the Oatley Park Avenue exit of the Park, work on a picnic area at the upper part of Lime Kiln Bay and the consideration of the ponding system. It also re-submitted the Consultative Committee idea. It suggested that funds could be obtained from the Whitlam Government's Area Improvement Program and Regional Employment Development Scheme. By March, there was still no response to the Committee's request for clarification of the legal status of various parts of the bay.

24 July 1975 A year after the previous forum, LKBPC and OFF had a second conference with Hurstville Council. The issues raised show a widening interest beyond the reclamation of the bay. In addition to the ponding system, picnic grounds and Consultative Committee, the forum called for the establishment of a Council Environment Officer, the adoption of Management Plans for Oatley Park and Gungah Bay (Myles Dunphy) Reserve, the removal of the old causeway fill at Lime Kiln Bay, the charging of trail bike riders illegally using the parks, a grant to OFF to publish a booklet on Oatley Park and a call for Council to reject the proposed construction of an Olympic Pool in Oatley Park. The future of the eastern arm was still in the balance. Ald Russ Smith said it would "possibly be saved" and Council Engineer Anderson said it was "difficult to say".

LKBPC knew that Gungah Bay, Jew Fish Bay and Edith Bay in Lugarno were all destined to be "reclaimed". Council had applied to the State Planning Authority as early as 1971 to do this. It was a crucial part of the Committee's appeal to the Oatley West community that if Lime Kiln Bay was destroyed then "your bays are next". Politically and tactically, this was the domino theory – fear based on reality. This idea was first publicised in January 1974, but was met with incredulity in some quarters. The Committee began to press Hurstville Council to release its Management Plan because it was known that this would reveal the Council's intentions for

those 3 bays. In May 1976, the Wran Labor Government was elected and Frank Walker became Attorney-General and an influential figure in Cabinet. On 5 July 1976, Council placed the Hurstville Planning Scheme on public exhibition. Gungah Bay, Jew Fish Bay, Lime Kiln Bay and the eastern bank of Salt Pan Creek were all marked for infilling (coloured light green on the map). There was an immediate uproar in Oatley West.

17 August 1976 A public meeting of 70 residents formed the **Preserve Oatley West Resident Action Group (or POW)**. It had an impressive and formidable list of patrons : Hon F.J. Walker, MLA; Ald. Mrs J. Loew; Prof D. Dunphy PhD; Prof Y.T. Tchan DSc; Dr G.F. Humphrey MSc; and Mr F.C. Bailey ASAIM. President was Mr R.E. Smith and Secretary was Mrs Faye Gervasoni.

POW had the funds to print and distribute leaflets. It also conducted letter writing campaigns to Council Aldermen and State MPs. About 200 objections were lodged. People were urged to ring Aldermen and a petition to State Parliament contained 4,300 signatures. On 14 October, POW organised a big public meeting at the church hall on the corner of Mulga and Gungah Bay Roads, attended by 480 people. A sum of \$130 was collected at the meeting for future campaigning. Hurstville Mayor, Ald N. Bergin, in face of a hostile audience, said that the Council would not fill in the bays by dumping rubbish, but that the Council's plan was to allow "natural reclamation" by siltation over 20 years and then the area would be turned into parklands.

The POW campaign had the support of a diverse range of local groups, including OFF, Oyster Growers Association (Georges River Branch), St George Sport Fishing Club, Peakhurst South Progress Association, the P&C of Oatley and Oatley West schools, and the National Trust (which had declared the area "worthy of preservation"). As its activities overlapped that of the LKBPC, that Committee amalgamated with POW.

Although Council at its meeting on 21 Oct 1976 still continued to discuss tipping garden waste, clean up materials and road construction in Lime Kiln Bay, the community had been assured by the State Government that the Council would have to have the concurrence of both the Government and the MWDA to do so. In spite of suspicions aroused after reading the Council's Health Surveyor's report of 21 October, it appeared that the long campaign to save Lime Kiln's eastern arm had been won.

Meeting
20/10/76
demands
council
re-think

OATLEY BAYS
20-10-1976

400 JOIN PROTEST ON BAY ZONING

Protests are mounting against Hurstville Council's plan to zone the heads of three bays.

About 400 people agreed at a public meeting last week to ask the council to rescind its proposal on Gungah, Lime Kiln and Jewish bays.

About 4300 people have signed a protest petition.

The meeting was organised by POW, The Preserve Oatley West action group.

Local residents have until October 29, to lodge protests against the council's re-development plan, in which the bay areas are marked for open space.

'No garbage'

The campaign was given an unexpected boost at the meeting when the 300 people contributed \$127 for continuing publicity and advertising.

Hurstville Mayor (Ald. N. Bergin) gave an undertaking his council would not fill the bays by dumping garbage.

He said the re-development plan was to allow "natural reclamation."

"Reclamation by natural situation in the mangrove swamp areas could take up to 20 years," he told the

garbage, Hurstville Council's Engineer (Mr. E. Anderson), reported to the last council meeting.

Mr Anderson said the plan had been produced on the basis of the bays being self-reclaiming.

He said it could be 20 years before the bays were self-reclaimed to the lines shown on the plan.

"At this stage, the council is only indicating its intention to make parklands out of the areas," he said.

In his report, Mr Anderson said the bays were silting up rapidly and he believed they would continue to do so because they were ideal settling ponds for silt.

Easy deposit

"Mangroves are ideal silt and debris traps and accelerate the land reclamation of bays where water velocity is low and silt

said council should be trying to preserve the areas in their natural state without thinking of future parklands.

She said it was a very backward step on the part of the council to be thinking of reclaiming the mangrove areas.

Save areas

"Mangroves are recognised all over the world for their important contribution to ecology," she said.

"The people who live there like the mangroves — that is why they are living there.

"We should be thinking about how to save the areas.

Mr Anderson said the silt could only be removed from the mangroves at "enormous expense."

"The mangroves are increasing rapidly, and so is the siltation," he said.

He said it was never the council's intention to

Our unique area

Oatley is a unique area. Its quiet, treelined streets, village character, water views and wooded foreshores form one of the best residential environments in Sydney. It is not an exclusive suburb of the wealthy but houses a wide range of incomes and occupations. All these qualities, valued by local residents, are threatened by Hurstville Council's foreshore proposals.

Council's foreshore proposals

On 5th July 1976 Hurstville Municipal Council placed its draft planning scheme on public display. Many local residents were astounded to see that Council obviously proposes to destroy the natural qualities of four river bays by filling: Gungah Bay, Jew Fish Bay and the eastern arm of Lime Kiln Bay. In addition it proposes to fill two lengths of foreshore in Salt Pan Creek.

Foreshore filling and you

Hurstville Council's proposed foreshore filling concerns all local residents. It means increased traffic in our residential streets. It threatens recreational fishing and will reduce the local oyster industry. It will greatly reduce the number of mature trees in the municipality, involving a loss of birdlife too. More and more people are becoming aware of the part our local tidal flats and natural foreshores play in the ecology of the whole of Georges River and Botany Bay. Georges River should be preserved as a natural system. Who wants to live near an urban drain?

Loss of fishing

In the early part of this century a local resident expected to bring home a sugar bag full of fish after a morning on the river. Good catches are much more rare these days. But recreational fishing is part of the

way of life of many residents of Hurstville Municipality. Filling of foreshores removes the tidal flats which are the main refuge and feeding ground of small fish and crabs. "Our estuaries comprise possibly the State's most valuable resource ecologically, economically, socially and aesthetically. Of the State's commercial fish and prawn catch 80% is taken from or is dependant on the estuaries. The most popular amateur recreational pursuit in the estuaries is fishing." The value of estuaries for the tourist industries is inestimable.

(From 'Our Vulnerable Estuaries' by D.J. Dunstan, Marine Biologist of NSW State Fisheries Department.)

Threat to oyster industry

Georges River oysters are recognised as among the best in the world. The best oyster leases are always located near mangroves. It is thought that these foreshore trees harbour the micro-organisms essential as food for oysters.

"Reclamation" of Mangrove areas results in the loss of a vital fringe zone. It increases water pollution by reducing the amount of incoming ocean water available to dilute the pollutants. Reduction of tidal ventilation in turn increases siltation of river channels destroying further important food sources for marine life. Thus foreshore filling threatens the oyster industry through reduction of food sources and increasing the level of pollution.

Loss of trees and birdlife

As the aerial photo overleaf shows, a large proportion of the remaining trees in Hurstville is found along the waterfront. Filling will simply kill existing trees in and around the filled area. As the trees and the tidal flats disappear, so will our wide range of birdlife, including egrets, ibis, herons, and ducks.

Increased traffic hazard

Council's proposals will increase traffic across the municipality. During the filling operations there will be a major flow of heavy trucks through quiet residential streets leading to the filling areas.

When the filled areas are complete and in use as playing fields the overall level of traffic movement will be increased causing congestion. The road systems of Oatley, Mortdale, Peakhurst and Pendurast were not designed to feed large numbers of cars to and from the southern edge of the Municipality.

Foreshore tipping — a disgrace

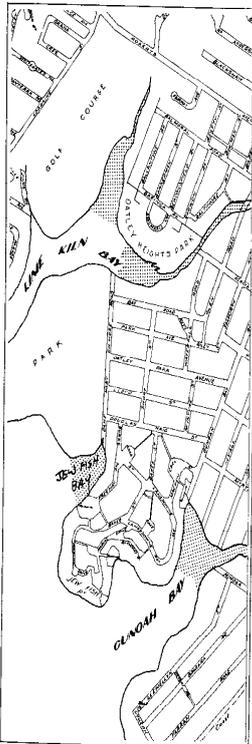
Garbage disposal by tipping into rivers and creeks should have stopped long ago in Sydney municipalities. Yet it is still acceptable to Hurstville Council. Visit the Roberts Avenue Garbage Tip (northern arm of Lime Kiln Bay) and see for yourself whether you wish this process to be continued in your municipality. It presents a health hazard through flies and vermin. It creates a public nuisance through dust, noise and stench. It presents a continuing source of water pollution through the escape of 'leachate' to public waterways. In short, garbage tipping into rivers and creeks is a disgrace.

Alternative means of garbage disposal

There are a number of alternative ways of disposing of municipal garbage which have a much less adverse effect on the environment. The Metropolitan Waste Disposal Authority wants Hurstville Council to dump at Menai (on a plateau). Some Sydney municipalities have built pollution free garbage incinerators, some are considering garbage compacting plants which greatly reduce transport requirements and the acreage required for disposal. Some overseas plants turn garbage into building blocks and there is a growing movement for the diversion of garbage into several elements for composting or recycling.

1976

Oatley West bays threatened



Hurstville Council's Planning Scheme enables the filling of extensive foreshore areas. The present filling of the northern arm of Lime Kiln Bay is being carried out with garbage. Areas affected are in Gungah Bay, Jew Fish Bay and the eastern arm of Lime Kiln Bay as shown above. There are two more areas on the eastern bank of Salt Pan Creek. The planning scheme is on exhibition at Council Offices. Objections to Hurstville Council must be lodged by 22nd October, 1976. After that date objections should be sent to the Hon Paul Landa MLC Minister for Planning and Environment, 139 Macquarie Street, Sydney. Final decision on the fate of our foreshores rests with the Minister.

Seventy Oatley West residents met on 17th August 1976. They unanimously agreed to form the Preserve Oatley West resident action group. Support POW and oppose the filling of estuary heads in the Hurstville area or elsewhere and ensure the preservation of remaining natural bushland in the Hurstville Municipality.

Patrons

The Hon F.J. Walker LL.M, MLA,
Ald Mrs J. Loew
Prof D.C. Dunphy PhD, Med.
Prof. Y.T. Tchan DSc.
Dr G.F. Humphrey MSc, PhD
Mr F.C. Bailey ASAIM

President

Mr R.E. Smith AAIV
121 Mimi Street, Oatley
57.8833

Secretary

Mrs F.E. Gervasoni
8 Kitchener Street, Oatley
579.1772

LIME KILN BAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY

from notes by David Koffel

After Hurstville Council decided not to proceed with the reclamation of Lime Kiln Bay in October 1976, the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Committee transformed itself into the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Society in 1977.

Whereas the Committee had been involved in saving the bay from reclamation, the Society was focused on the clean-up and the regeneration of the area. This initiative began with Julian Sheen publishing an Action Statement in August 1977, outlining principles, goals and strategy. He appealed to local residents to give assistance in removing rubbish, car bodies, household waste and noxious weeds, especially lantana, privet, blackberry and prickly pear. Julian Sheen, Graham Quint, Paul Kennedy and a few others then began a program of weed eradication in the upper reaches of the bay. At first these were rather hit and miss affairs, but were significant as they led to the regular Bradley Method programs of the 1980s.

The first weekend in which local residents began work in Lime Kiln Bay was on 20 August 1977. The work was in the area adjacent to Waterfall Road. A dozen residents spent most of Saturday clearing privet, lantana and rubbish from the creek and surrounding area. This was one of the first urban bush regeneration projects in Sydney. The task was daunting but the committee resolved to continue working in the area every fortnight and then every Saturday. There was a strong feeling of public and community spiritedness.

As the work continued and the numbers of volunteers grew, Julian Sheen and David Thorp issued another appeal for local residents to continue cleaning up and regenerating the bay. They issued a statement observing that “regrettably, the area adjacent to Waterfall Road, Oatley, is fast being destroyed by privet, old rusty cars, beer cans and other ills of city life.” It announced that the Society intended “to regenerate this beautiful area of natural bush with planning and hard work.” The aims of the Society were :

1. to remove rubbish and weeds.
2. to regenerate the growth of native plants.
3. to clear out the creek beds.
4. to incorporate the area into a greater Oatley Park complex.
5. to consult with local residents and conservation experts on the planning and administration of the area.

In March 1978, eight Oatley Lions, led by Ralph Newbould, descended on the creek bed, armed with shovels, picks, axes and power saws and backed up by a diesel trench digger hired at \$15 an hour. After 15 hours’ toil, they

moved an old car, clearing the creek bed and building up the banks. A week later 300 mm of rain fell in less than a week causing the creek to flood and break its banks. But when the rain stopped and the creek subsided, the water stayed in its original course and did not flow down the fire trail as it previously had done. (*Leader*, 12-4-1978)

By June 1978, the Society had formalised itself. Ralph Newbould, who had been President since 1977, continued in that position. Graham Quint was Secretary. The Committee consisted of Jenny Quint, Bill and Robin Groves, Paul and Bev Kennedy, Anne and Bruce Wingrove, Col and Jean Burg, Julian and Annette Sheen, Phyl Bryden, Chris Guthrie, Bruce Moffit, Tim and Linda Gibson, Peter and Lesley Cox, David and Tricia Koffel and Joan Aston.

At this time, the Bradley Method of bush regeneration was being established and the committee members sought to introduce the method to Lime Kiln Bay. Jenny and Graham Quint attended the first bush regeneration course at Mosman run by the National Trust and led by Joan Bradley and Tony May. Later, Ralph Newbould, Phyl Bryden and Joan Aston attended. Good numbers followed at later courses. Links were also established with Lane Cove Council through the work of Judy Messer. Subsequently, on 29 Sept 1978, the Society published a Statement of Basic Principles, Objects and Methods (i.e., Bradley Method) with a view to eventually including the area in Oatley Park or Georges River National Park.

Apart from the time consuming and labour intensive work of restoring and regenerating the bay, the Society involved itself in the following issues :

- persuasion of Hurstville Council to distribute information on bush regeneration;
- rejection of the Water Activities Centre;
- sale of native plants (to raise money) at stalls;
- encouragement of Oatley West Primary School to visit LKB on excursion;
- encouragement of Oatley West Primary School to plant a native garden;
- liaison with Council in matters relating to LKB (e.g., mulch delivery, removal of weed bags, cessation of weed spraying);
- visits by Council Aldermen and Engineer to the regenerated areas;
- encouragement of Council to establish an Advisory Committee for Oatley Park;
- encouragement of Council to officially adopt the Bradley Method of bush regeneration;

- took an interest in general and national environmental issues, including the establishment of Wollemi NP, threats to the Barrier Reef, the Wran Government's 1978 Environment and Assessment Bill, planting and management of street trees, the pollution threat to Georges River oysters, Lord Howe Island preservation, Terania Creek, fire hazard reduction in Oatley Park, trail bikes in Oatley Park, Macquarie Marshes, Plant Breeders' Rights, Franklin Dam and Wolli Creek.

To promote the Bradley Method, the Society organised a joint meeting of local environmental groups. It was held on 14 Nov 1978 and chaired by Ralph Newbould. In attendance were 1. from Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Society – Ralph Newbould, Anne Wingrove, Paul Kennedy, Graham Quint, Bill Groves, Phyl Bryden (also representing OFF). 2. from Preserve Oatley West – Jean Shepherd, Bill Hall, Bob Smith, Gwen Helman (also representing OFF). 3. from Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Soc. – Phyl Bryden, Gwen Helman, Val Argall. 4. from Jewfish Point and Peninsula Residents' Committee – Peter de Beuzeville, Gloria Birrell, Margaret Todd. 5. from Lugarno Progress Association – Russ Smith, John Watters. The meeting resolved to “jointly request Hurstville Council to consider the official adoption of the Bradley method of bush regeneration in the bushland of the Hurstville Municipality in accordance with the recommendation to Metropolitan Councils by the Noxious Plants Advisory Board of the Department of Agriculture, May 1978.” Further, the meeting resolved to gather information for a pamphlet suitable for the Hurstville area. Hurstville Council accepted the proposal in June 1979.

The Society's work continued. Tim Gibson became its Secretary in Jan 1982. In Jan 1983, the Society approached Council with its proposal for a picnic ground. After Council approval, major work on the picnic ground started in March. Locals, assisted by the East Hills Group of the Society for Growing Australian Plants and a number of Venturer Scouts, removed Balloon Vine, Wandering Jew and other weeds from the site. The Society purchased about 200 mature Casuarina and Paperbark trees with a grant from the National Tree Programme, planting them around the picnic site to enrich the original stands of trees which had become depleted. Hurstville Council accepted the name Giriwa Picnic Grounds for the area (“Giriwa” meaning “lizard” in the Dharawal language of the Gwiyalgal tribe, after the lizard rock engraving discovered nearby), installed seats and tables beside the creek and constructed a set of steps for easy access at the bottom of Acacia Street. The Picnic Grounds were officially opened on 10 Sept 1983 by the Mayor, Ald Bert O'Connor. Also present were Ald Julian Sheen, the Federal Member for Barton, Gary Punch, and the Minister for Youth and Community Services, Frank Walker.

Mrs Bev Kennedy became Secretary of the Society in 1985 and Mrs Linda Gibson was President in 1988. In July 1985, following consultation with the Dept of Public Works and the University of NSW, the Society proposed the construction of freshwater wetlands at the junction of Lime Kiln Creek and the eastern arm of the bay. Graham Quint produced a "Lime Kiln Bay Wetland Rehabilitation Plan". At its meeting of 15 July 1994, Hurstville City Council resolved : " That an application be prepared in consultation with local environment groups for development of a wetland system in Lime Kiln Bay. Further, that additional sources of grant funding be investigated." The Council managed to obtain a Commonwealth Federation Fund grant and also had the assistance of the NSW EPA Stormwater Trust. The National Trust prepared a detailed design for LKBPS and submitted it for Council consideration.

In the period between the wetlands proposal and its construction by the Council, the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Society wound down its activities, partly because some members had either died or moved, partly because many of the Society's objectives had been achieved. Bushcare and rehabilitation was continued by Council which was able to put more people into the field on a more regular basis.

The construction of the ponds was completed in 2000 and the Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands were officially opened on 8 Sept 2001 by Mayor Bill Pickering.

LIME KILN BAY BUSH REGENERATION

In late 1977, a small group of residents went to the Waterfall Street area of Lime Kiln Bay one Saturday afternoon to remove weeds that were choking the area. The group included Paul Kennedy, David Koffel, Julian Sheen and a friend of Paul's, Graham Quint. The weeds were attacked with gusto, particularly the privet (it grew back very quickly). We continued with our efforts until, led by Graham Quint, we realised that we weren't getting very far and needed to be more scientific. In 1978 we found that we were in the forefront of a city-wide trend towards volunteer bushland restoration groups. We linked up with other innovative groups, particularly the Bradley sisters and Judy Messer's group at Lane Cove. We exchanged ideas and attended courses and demonstrations around Sydney.

This activity became a major movement across Sydney and the Lime Kiln group was at the very cutting edge. I was a Councillor on Hurstville Council at the time and was able to gain some support for the fledgling activity. Our work became the Lime Kiln Bay Bush Regeneration Group. During the 1980s, it was extended from Lime Kiln Bay to a number of other bushland areas.

Oatley Flora and Fauna was an interested supporter of this activity.

Julian Sheen 9 July 2005

POULTON PARK

In the late 1960s, Kogarah Council was being pressured by bayside residents for Oatley Bay to be dredged in order to allow access to their properties by boat. As the bay was badly silted, the dredging was not initially opposed by OFF but the main problem was what to do with the silt. Council considered three options : barging it to sea (this was too expensive), forming an island in the bay (an outcry from residents around the bay silenced this) and pouring the silt into Poulton Park to create playing fields. The last suggestion met with enthusiastic support from Council aldermen but strong opposition from conservationists.

Council used permission granted by the Chief Secretary in 1936 to go ahead with the dredging. A causeway was built across the head of the north-east arm, thus continuing Moreshead Drive and cutting off the tidal flow to and from the “filthy mangroves”. The silt was then to be pumped across the causeway into Poulton Park, covering the mangroves and filling the valley of the estuary. This was considered a cheap method of disposal of the silt because the Council ascribed no value to the naturalness of the Park. The silt was expected to dry out and form a base for new playing fields.

In May 1971, OFF sent to each alderman a statement on the value of the mangroves. Kogarah Council’s Engineer, Mr Lindsay, warned that it would not be possible to save the mangroves, and also, in his opinion, the silt would not dry out to form a hard base. This view was supported by expertise from OFF. But Council Aldermen disregarded the warnings and on 5 July 1971 voted to go ahead with the dredging and pumping of silt into Poulton Park. Council formed an Oatley Bay Dredging Committee; Phil Hall attended its first meeting on behalf of OFF.

OFF’s view was contained in a letter dated 27 August 1971 to Council when it requested that Poulton Park be declared a “Native Flora and Fauna Reserve”. Another reaction was the establishment of a fighting committee. Ray Knight, Vice-president of OFF, had previously organized a sub-committee known as the Environment Protection Sub-committee to keep an eye on any action which might damage the local environment. From this group developed The Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee which had a nucleus of OFF members but drew other interested people from the community. This was supported by INSPECT (a high school students association), by Professor Dexter Dunphy from the University of NSW, by Mr Francois from the Fisheries

Department, by Phillip Sutton (Director of Environmental Studies Association), by Frank Walker MP and by many others. By July 11, a petition bearing 3000 signatures was presented to Council; Professor Dunphy and Mr Sutton addressed Council to explain the value of the Park; letters appeared in the local and Sydney press; radio and TV presented the story; circulars were letter-boxed to all homes in the district; four information sheets were prepared for schools to send to the Mayor and Council; and urgent letters were sent to all relevant government departments.

All this brought an immediate response from authorities. A letter to Council from the Chief Secretary on July 14 stated : “My department is now not bound by that decision [permission to dredge granted in 1936] as the conservation principles were not then understood.” Council was directed to submit plans before further action. In the meantime, the causeway was being constructed. OFF requested that a large concrete pipe be placed under it to allow tidal flow to the mangroves, but this conflicted with Council’s objectives.

On 27 February 1972, the Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee met at the Letitia Street home of Ray Knight. Representing OFF were Phil Hall (OFF President), Ida Carder (OFF Secretary) and Evol Knight. Also present were Philip Sutton (Inspect), Dexter Dunphy and Alan Waacke (Save Poulton Park), Ian and Gwen Fulton (Bankstown Conservation Society), Yvonne Tierney (Council of Social Services of the Sutherland Shire), Mr and Mrs Allen and Garth Hogg (Sutherland Nature Conservation Society), Mark Gelberman and Glen Hayes (Wolli-St George Conservation Society), John Derwent (an oyster farmer) and R. A. Julian. This meeting developed its arguments against the project and urged the public to visit the park and see what was happening, sign the petition, contact a Member of Parliament or telegram the mayor and councillors urging them to retain Poulton Park as a natural reserve and oppose the dumping of silt in the park.

Four problems were identified. First was the nature of the silt to be pumped from the bay. It was a very liquid oozy organic mud with almost no real substance. The Council Engineer stated in a response to Aldermen’s questions that “the whole thing will become a plain of mud and water for a period” and implied that it would never properly dry out. The second problem was that the dredge was the wrong kind for the operation. It was a suction cutter type dredge which pumped a mixture of 96% water and only 4%

solids. Being so liquid, the mix would be hard to control, hard to dry out and would be washed downstream back into the bay. Thirdly, if the silt was used to top the existing playing field as planned to a height of 12 feet, the silt would not provide a solid base for a new field. Finally, there was the question of protecting the mangrove stand. The original plan was to cover the mangroves with silt. If the road causeway was completed, salt water would not flow into the mangroves and they would die anyway. This would destroy important breeding grounds for fish and prawns and remove an educational opportunity as Poulton Park was on a list to become an Environmental Study Centre for school children.

The Committee's arguments seemed to be common sense. A sea of mud would be created in the park which would take years to dry out (if at all). The mangroves would be destroyed and the bushland slopes would be affected. Much of the silt would find its way back into the bay in flood rains. The operation was therefore a destructive and futile exercise, costing up to two million dollars. It would not solve the silting problem in Oatley Bay but would ruin an important and beautiful community resource. Surrounding homes would be looking down on a waste of dead trees and mud instead of the green valley and trees of the untouched reserve.

The February 1972 edition of *OFF News* optimistically stated that the Poulton Park issue "looks like having a happy ending" as the Lands Department had withdrawn its permission to dredge. In July 1972, Ray Knight on behalf of the Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee issued an open letter to the residents of Kogarah outlining clearly its position as the local press would not print their letters and their opponents were putting out false information.

Council, however, would not give up the project and throughout 1972-73 the battle continued with interviews, meetings, letters and inspections from various government departments. In 1973 an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was produced and as a result the Minister for Environment, Jack Beale, gave approval for the dredging to proceed. However, the stand of mangroves was to be preserved and Council was directed to place three pipes under the causeway. In a letter printed in the *Leader* (5-11-1973), Ida Carder, Secretary of OFF, questioned the wisdom of the scheme on the basis that dredging the bay would not only be very expensive, but it would have a short term effect and the supposed benefit of dredging to provide deep water frontages and jetties was doubtful.

It was a tragedy, she concluded, to lose this irreplaceable area of bushland for a scheme that was not a final solution.

The Save Poulton Park Committee pointed out errors and omissions in the EIS. A statement by committee member Rohan Rovik, reported in the *Leader* (29-1-1974), claimed that the Council's impact study was inadequate as it had given no consideration to the effects of large quantities of saline silt material on the remaining fringe bushland and that Council had failed to consider other methods of disposal of the silt, such as dumping out to sea. He called for the State Pollution Control Commission to place a four months restraining order on Council operations. The Pollution Control Commission replied on 22 February 1974 giving the terms of the lifting of the restraining order and directing that in future submissions be addressed to Kogarah Council. The mangroves were to remain but the silt could be pumped over the inner bay. The March edition of *OFF News* concluded that "with the decision of Kogarah Council to proceed with the plan, it looks as though the long battle to save Poulton Park is coming to an unhappy – in our opinion – end."

In Aug 1974, the Metropolitan Waste Disposal Authority announced that a Lucas Heights site was to become a common tipping ground for Rockdale, Kogarah, Hurstville and Sutherland Councils within 18 months. Curiously, the central tip idea was not favoured by Kogarah Council and it resolved to ask the MWDA for an extension of time on its garbage dumping program at Moore and Renown Parks. It wanted to continue its own plans "for several more years". Ald Duggan expressed the view of most aldermen when he said: "All we want is the right to dump in our municipality, so we can establish more playing and recreation areas out of wasteland". (*Leader*, 28-8-1974)

In 1975, OFF was disgusted to learn that Kogarah Council had received a grant of \$200,000 from the State Government to be spent on dredging and reclamation. A protest was made but it was too late – the money had been paid.

The fight had raged for nearly 6 years. Letters and press reports continued. Council meetings attended by the "for" and "against" were often quite acrimonious. In retrospect (but not at the time), several incidents occurred which appear amusing. On one occasion, INSPECT had arranged for Alan Reid, Environmental Educationist, to take a group of about 40 teachers and pupils to the

Park. As the local press gleefully reported (*Leader*, 27 February 1974), some aldermen and 200 of their supporters arrived on the scene with loud speakers and broke up the meeting. One Alderman, Mr R. MacKenzie said that conservationists should be called “mangrovites”. “Why should they want to conserve a dirty, stinking mass at Poulton Park, which is not an asset to the community?” he asked. Alderman A. H. Hardiman suggested that “perhaps we can see if we can save a patch of the mud at Poulton Park for the ‘mangrovites’ to wallow in.”

On another occasion, the Council Health Inspector was reported by the press to have stated that there was a danger to the community of malaria and dengue fever from mosquitoes breeding in the mangroves of the Park. An inspector from the NSW Health Department was sent to investigate. The inspector reported “No mosquitoes found”. “No, because we sprayed the mangroves for ten days with dieldrin and kerosene,” was the reply from Council officers. This was not well received, and was later toned down – only a “safe” level of dieldrin was said to have been used.

Attitudes change with time and councils change their personnel and priorities. By the end of the 1970s, the bay continued to silt up despite about \$3 million having been spent on dredging. Half the mangroves had gone. The children’s soccer field and bush surrounds were covered with silt that would not dry out (the Council Engineer had been right) and the silt covered area was surrounded by a high cyclone fence with a notice warning of danger due to quicksand. At a meeting on 3 January 1979, Council voted to end the dredging and to concentrating on upgrading Poulton Park which was, in the words of one alderman, “a filthy, black, horrible swamp.”

Conservationists lost the long battle for Poulton Park, but without the fight things would be much worse than they are today. The remaining mangroves are flourishing thanks to the concrete pipes under the causeway. Council (with input from OFF which obtained funding from Coastcare) replanted roadside verges and made buffer plantings around the water’s edge. A boardwalk was constructed to help educate people about the value of mangroves and there is an on-going program of weed removal. Today the surrounding bushland is managed for its beauty and diversity.

WHAT ABOUT THE TOTAL CONCEPTS REPORT?

Despite public interest in this matter, Council has not publicised the main features of the final report commissioned from the consulting firm *Total Concepts* at the cost of thousands of dollars of ratepayers' money. Shouldn't Council want the public to know this? That dredging could begin almost immediately if Council adopted one of the solutions proposed in that report. If Council would settle for dredging a centreline channel with the silt barged to sea and dumped there, all parties would be satisfied. The cost? According to the report, \$112,000. This is \$35,000 more than the report estimates it would cost to dredge a channel and dump into the Park. But, in fact, dredging into the Park would be far more expensive. Why? Because, according to the report, there would be an additional \$104,000 required to control the silt when it is in the Park, to dry it out and surface it. (This cost does not include the landscaping shown in the Council's pretty pictures.) So barging to sea is the cheaper and simpler solution. It also preserves the mangroves and the Park. Council could adopt this scheme—why hasn't it done so?

IS KOGARAH COUNCIL REALLY TRYING?

Why can't Kogarah Council prepare an adequate plan when this and other practical solutions are available? Two possible explanations are:

- (1) Council doesn't have adequate resources to prepare such a plan. This is doubtful. Council has qualified engineering staff, a report prepared by experts and it has rejected expert advice offered by this Committee.
- (2) Possibly Council members like the idea of dredging but don't want to spend the money on it. You may recall that claims have been made on behalf of the Council that it was elected on its opposition to the building of an expensive new town hall and its support for the dredging. They are now building a new town hall at more than the original cost. It must be embarrassing to have to compound the appearance of going back on an electoral promise by also failing to dredge. So, they put off the dredging, by enthusiastically supporting dredging in public but making proposals to the Commission which result only from a half-hearted commitment. This has the added benefit that the whole mess can be attributed to the conservationists and the Commission. It also saves actually spending money on the project. Are you prepared to give them credit for supporting dredging when Mr. Coffey states that they haven't even applied for permission to dredge, let alone submitted any feasible plans?

COUNCIL'S LATEST THREAT TO POULTON PARK

In one of its recent resolutions (17th April) Council refers darkly to abandoning dredging altogether and proceeding "to reclaim Poulton Park by other means". We are convinced that, unless there is a public outcry, Council will proceed irresponsibly to destroy this beautiful bushland Park one way or another. Already considerable damage has been done in sections of the Park, particularly the mangrove area which supports fish and wildlife. If you want, as we do, the area maintained in its natural beauty, help us ensure that Council does two things: (1) dredges a channel to maintain the Bay, to allow boating access, and to preserve the mangroves, and (2) retains Poulton Park as a natural bushland area. Contact us if you would like to help or want more information, and call your local alderman and let him know your views.

WRITE TO: THE SECRETARY, SAVE POULTON PARK CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, P.O. Box No. 2, Mortdale 2223, or telephone: 579-4982, 579-3243, 579-3856, 865-2899 or 846-8558.

YOUR LOCAL ALDERMEN:

NORTH WARD
E. J. Baker (Mayor), 587-3766; Work: 20961, Ext. 8543.
R. T. Gardner, 587-3696. M. W. Turner, 524-3871.

MIDDLE WARD
E. A. Duggan, 54-3122; Work: 54-1428. F. B. Covenagh, 54-2393.
R. W. Isaacs, 54-5009.

EAST WARD
A. S. Oakey, 522-0959; Work: 529-9330. W. K. K. Spalding, 670-1351.
B. J. Langton, 587-6609.

WEST WARD
A. W. Hadman, 57-5736. R. J. MacKenzie, 57-3319 (Deputy Mayor).
G. D. Wood, 579-1662.

Authorised by: R. A. Knight, 129 Letitia Street, Oatley.
8th JULY, 1972. Printed by Waite & Bull Pty Limited, Sydney

A CALL TO THE RESIDENTS OF KOGARAH MUNICIPALITY TO SUPPORT Mr. E. J. COFFEY DIRECTOR, STATE POLLUTION CONTROL COMMISSION

We have much pleasure in presenting the full text of a letter from the Director of the State Pollution Control Commission addressed to the Editor of the *St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader*, Hurstville, of 2nd June, 1972:

"Dear Sir,

I am sure your readers would like to have a statement of the facts concerning the dealings between the State Pollution Control Commission and Kogarah Council in regard to Oatley Bay and Poulton Park. I therefore trust that you will give the facts the same prominence as you gave the statements of the aldermen of Kogarah Council on the front page of your issue of May 31st. The readers may then decide for themselves the validity or otherwise of the viewpoints which were expressed.

Firstly, the Council has neither sought nor received the approval of the responsible government authorities for the dredging of Oatley Bay.

The Council seems to be relying on an approval given in December, 1936, for the reclamation of part of the north-west and north-east arms of the Bay. There was no mention of dredging in connection with this approval, and in any event the conditions of approval require plans of the proposed work to be submitted for approval before work is commenced. The conditions also require that the nature of the filling material be approved and that concrete or stone retaining walls be constructed.

The Council has not observed these conditions, so it has no legal right to proceed with the reclamation of the north-east arm, let alone with the dredging of the Bay.

The law provides that approval shall be obtained before projects of this nature are commenced, and the provisions of the law apply equally to Kogarah Council as they do to any other person or body. Kogarah Council has nevertheless refused to meet its obligations in this regard.

In an effort to bring about resolution of the unsatisfactory situation that had arisen, the Commission, in March of this year, undertook to assist the Council by using its co-ordinating powers to seek statements of requirements from the appropriate Government Departments and Authorities.

This undertaking was given to a deputation of Council representatives received by the Minister for Environment Control, following which I received a letter from The Town Clerk, dated 23rd March, from which I quote— "Council has asked me to convey to you its sincere appreciation for your assistance in this matter and for the valuable advice which you were able to pass on to the members of the deputation."

This is strangely inconsistent with the remarks of alderman reported in your issue of May 31st.

In keeping with its offer, the Commission did write to the five public authorities at interest and has now received replies from three. On receipt of the outstanding replies, the Council will be bringing with a consolidated statement.

In the meantime, the Commission has informed the Council of the specific requirements of the Commission and of the reasons for the Commission's concern about the proposed project.

As has been indicated to the Council, the Commission recognises the desirability of dredging Oatley Bay and wishes to do all it can to help to promote the achievement of this objective. However, it is not satisfied on the question of whether or not the dredged material should be pumped on to Poulton Park, and it has been attempting to get from the Council clear-cut statements of their plans in this regard and evidence of their ability to successfully implement these plans.

The Council now admits that it has no meaningful plans to present. It just wants to start dredging and to pump the dredged material into Poulton Park and its adjacent tidal area. It says that it has not got the resources to prepare plans but that it will find its way through the problems as they arise.

It nevertheless commissioned an artist to show how Poulton Park would look after Oatley Bay was dredged and development in the part was completed. The artist's impression was printed in the *Leader* of 15th March.

The artist's impression was presented to the Commission, but without any information as to how it would be accomplished or where the huge amounts of money required would come from.

The Council has no proper engineering plans and, on its own assessment, has very limited financial and staff resources at its disposal for its proposed project. The possibility must therefore be contemplated that the whole exercise may prove to be abortive and to result in considerable environmental damage, with little compensating advantage having been gained.

Yes, I agree with the heading on your editorial of 31st May. A dredge decision is needed now, and for it to be given Kogarah Council must face up to its responsibilities and present the information needed to ensure that the public interest will be protected if approval is given.

Facts are needed, not emotional statements of the kind reported in the article of 31st May.

Yours faithfully,

E. J. COFFEY
Director,

STATE POLLUTION CONTROL COMMISSION."

FILL IN COUPON AND POST NOW

To: The Secretary
Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee
P.O. Box No. 2, Mortdale, NSW 2223

- I am prepared to help
 I need more information about
 I support the views of
- The Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee

Name

Address

Telephone No.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE RESIDENTS OF KOGARAH MUNICIPALITY.

FROM: The Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee

Dear Resident:

You are probably aware of the controversy in the past year over Kogarah Council's proposal to dredge the north-east arm of Oatley Bay and to deposit the silt in Poulton Park at the head of the Bay. You may well be one of the 3,000 people who signed our petition to save Poulton Park. If so, you will know that the Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee has played an important part in this controversy. Recently we have not been able to keep you informed through the local press because the *Leader* has not printed our letters. The *Leader* leaves us with no alternative to informing you directly of the views of an important and substantial section of public opinion.

DOES THE S.P.P.C.C. OPPOSE DREDGING?

We have been accused of opposing the dredging and delaying it. In fact, we have supported dredging publicly since 13th July, 1971. (S.M. Herald). We have made a number of proposals for dredging schemes which would not destroy Poulton Park—these were placed before Council on 17th September, 1971. We became increasingly concerned by the lack of action so on 24th March, 1972, we offered to provide Council with free expert advice in preparing satisfactory plans for dredging and silt disposal. This offer was rejected by Council. We have actively advocated plans for dredging which will preserve Poulton Park.

IS MR. COFFEY DELAYING DREDGING?

Kogarah Council has suggested that Mr. Coffey, Director of the State Pollution Control Commission, has opposed Council's dredging proposals. On 17th April, 1972, Kogarah Council resolved: "That the Director of the State Pollution Control Commission be advised that Council views with grave concern the apparent continued and unwarranted opposition to Council's dredging proposals and the fact that the Commission has not come up with any concrete proposal to allow Council to proceed with the dredging of the Bay." The council criticizes the Commission for not developing "any concrete proposal". This, of course, merely conceals Council's own failure to develop any practical plan for dredging which is even feasible from an engineering point of view, let alone one which ensures that the environment is protected. This is quite clear from Mr. Coffey's letter to the *Leader* (14th June, 1972). He wrote that (1) "the Council has neither sought nor received the approval of the responsible government authorities for the dredging of Oatley Bay" (this is required by law), and (2) "the Council now admits that it has no meaningful plans to present". Mr. Coffey makes clear in his letter that, apart from an artist's impression (*Leader*, 15th March), Council has submitted "no proper engineering plans".

WHO IS HOLDING UP DREDGING NOW?

The State Pollution Control Commission has been waiting for a concrete plan since 23rd November last year and such a plan was first requested by the State Government in July 1971. It is, of course, the Council's job to develop concrete proposals. The Commission's job is to decide whether these proposals meet its standards for protecting the environment. Publishing pretty pictures, we suggest, succeeds only in lulling the citizens into believing, contrary to fact, that adequate engineering plans have been prepared and costed. If Kogarah Council sincerely wants to undertake dredging, why has it not prepared and submitted concrete proposals to the Commission? Why has it refused assistance in preparing feasible plans.

JUST WHAT DOES COUNCIL PROPOSE TO DO?

Council has not bothered to take the public into its confidence about what it plans to do. Does Council propose to dredge only a central channel up the Bay or to dredge the whole N.E. arm? In a letter to the Council on 6th December last year (only part of which was published in *The Leader*), Mr. Coffey states "I have been advised verbally that it is intended to dredge the whole area of Oatley Bay." If this is so, then the operation will cost the rate-payers between half a million and a million dollars and the volume of silt removed as Mr. Coffey points out in his letter, would be "between 250,350 and 1,000,000 cubic yards." The volume available in the lower end of Poulton Park where Council suggests it be put "is 68,250 cubic yards". WHERE WILL THE REST GO???

Above : An Open Letter to Kogarah Residents from The Save
Poulton Park Campaign Committee, 8 July 1972.

Angry residents rout protesters

About 200 angry residents drove about 40 conservationists from Poulton Park last week and took control of a meeting the conservationists had organised.

The conservationists had called a "last-ditch-stand" meeting to oppose a plan to reclaim sections of the park.

The meeting of residents demanded that Kogarah Council begin work on dredging Oatley Bay immediately and reclaiming the park.

The residents shouted down conservation speakers.

A special speaker reported to have been sent from Melbourne by the Minister for Environment and Conservation (Dr M. Cass) never had a chance to talk.

Two of the main organisations opposing reclamation of the park, INSPECT and the Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee, organised the meeting, which

was given wide publicity.

Conservationists for years have opposed council's plans to dredge Oatley Bay and use the dredged material to fill in swampland in Poulton Park.

The proposals would make Oatley Bay navigable and Poulton Park useable for organised sport.

Kogarah aldermen attended the meeting in force. Ald. G. Woods successfully moved that council do all it can to prepare for the dredging.

Council was also asked to begin reclaiming the park above the high water mark and to move its dredge into position in Oatley Bay.

Council now is waiting for a "formal" certificate from the Minister for Local Government (Sir Charles Cutler), and a list of conditions imposed by State Government bodies before it begins dredging. One alderman who attended the meeting told the Leader:

"The people of Oatley are sick and tired of having a stinking, mosquito-infested swamp in their backyards.

"They're also weary of the conservationists hindering council clearing up the area and turning it into something useful for their kids.

"A small minority, many of whom don't live anywhere near the park, have been able to get what they want for too long.

"Now that council is about to get the go-ahead there is this last-ditch stand to delay it.

Mandate

"That's why the people who elected us to council mainly on this issue and gave us a clear mandate to reclaim the park, came out to stop the meeting.

"The people weren't organised by anyone—they came of their own accord, because they are sick of the whole thing."

At a meeting the following night, council endorsed unanimously the motions passed at the park meeting.

It decided to ask Mr T. F. Mead MLA (Lib., Hurstville) to ask Sir Charles Cutler to expedite the issuing of the certificate. A deputation of aldermen will also speak to Sir Charles.

Because of several cases of vandalism to council's dredge in Oatley Bay, council decided to find out the cost of providing armed guards for the dredge and reclamation work when it begins.

Ald. R. MacKenzie said that it was not right to call the groups conver-

He said he had made up a new name for them — "mangrovites."

"Why should they want to conserve a dirty, stinking mass at Poulton Park, which is not an asset to the community?" he said.

Ald. A. H. Hardiman, who attended the Poulton Park meeting said, "The conservationists got a warm reception.

"The leader, who I believe came from Paddington, wasn't allowed to speak.

"I believe that Dr. Cass saw fit to send a man from Melbourne.

"If he (Dr. Cass) is concerned, why hasn't he contacted us?"

"Blackmail"

"The people of Oatley have shown that they want the bay dredged.

"Perhaps we can see if we can save a patch of the mud at Poulton Park for the 'mangrovites' to wallow in."

Ald. Woods said that council had "stood on its head, bent over backwards, and had drunk a glass of water at the same time to please the environmentalists."

Council rejected a suggestion made by conservationists in a letter that the dredging be postponed for at least four months until more environmental examinations were made.

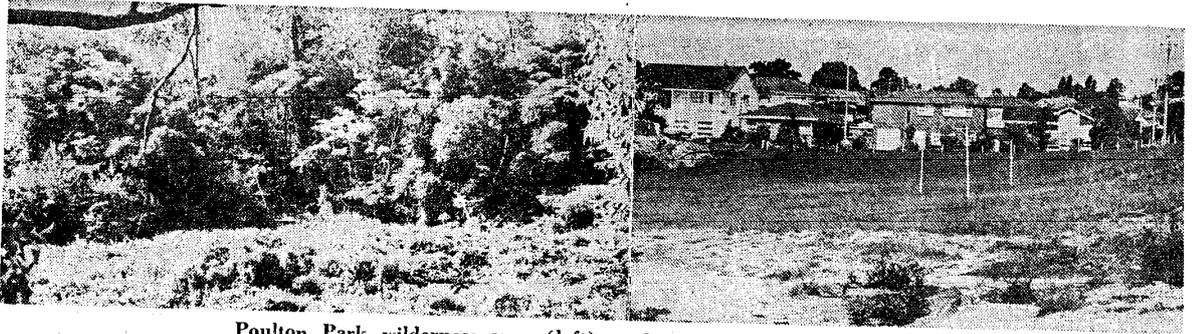
Ald. E. Duggan said, "I feel that we have put off the dredging too long. We should try to eliminate delays.

"If we don't begin on Oatley Bay before the September elections, and this council goes, the dredging will never be done.

He said that he considered as "blackmail" an offer by the conservationists to support council in its fight against proposed council amalgamations if it dropped the dredging plan.

ST. GEORGE LEADER
27 Feb 1974

POULTON PARK



Poulton Park wilderness area (left); and an area already reclaimed for netball courts.

By our Science Reporter

Committee fights council move to reclaim park

Conservationists are fighting a move by Kogarah Council to dredge Oatley Bay and use the silt to reclaim Poulton Park, a 52-acre natural wilderness area in South Hurstville.

The council's plan follows the recent recommendations of an environmental impact study drawn up for the council, and the decision of the former Minister for Environment Control, Mr Beale, to lift a two-year ban on dredging.

Local conservationists have called on the director of the State Pollution Control Commission, Mr E. J. Coffey, to place a restraining order on the council.

They say that if this move fails they will ask for a public inquiry.

The Save Poulton Park

Campaign Committee admits that the council's impact study is inadequate and that no public comment was called for on the recommendations.

The committee plans to have its own environmental impact statement drawn up.

It has asked the Pollution Control Commission for a four-month restraining order to be placed on the council.

A member of the committee, Mr Rohan Rovik, said the park was one of the few wilderness areas left in Sydney.

It consisted of a mangrove area and a more interesting bush area, which the council planned to reclaim with dredged silt from the bay.

"After reclamation has been completed, which will take at least six years, the main area in the val-

ley is to be developed into a sports area containing a football field and eight tennis courts, as well as parking lots."

The council had not taken into account the parks' unique wilderness character and wide variety of habitats which gave it a special educational, social and aesthetic value, Mr Rovik said.

The impact statement had given no consideration to the effect of large quantities of saline silt material on the remaining fringe bushland of the effect of dredging on the bay.

He claimed that the statement failed to consider other plans to dispose of the silt, such as dumping out at sea, or building an island in the bay.

A campaign by conservationists and residents two years ago brought about the original ban by the State Pollution Control Commission on dredging and reclamation.

A spokesman for the council said yesterday that it planned to go ahead with the dredging and reclamation within a few months.

SYDNEY MORNING
HERALD
Feb. 1974

St. Leo's Victoria 27 March 1974

POULTON PARK: WASTE OR WONDERLAND?

By PHILLIP SUTTON

Mr. Sutton was the Sydney convenor of INSPECT, an environmental education group, and was an active member of the Save Poulton Park Campaign Committee. This year he took up an appointment as director of the Environmental Studies Association of Victoria.

For many years conservationists have been fighting to save Poulton Park, a 52-acre bushland area, in South Hurstville.

Considerable controversy has developed with strong feeling expressed both for and against the project.

The people of the area have two valuable resources.

One is Oatley Bay, which is silted up and needs dredging, the other is the bushland of Poulton Park. Both resources are valuable and need preserving.

However, because Oatley Bay is silted up, citizen pressure has developed calling on Kogarah Council to dredge the bay. This in itself is perfectly reasonable.

But because of the desire to economise on an already expensive project, likely to cost anything from \$500,000 to \$1 million, the council and some of the citizens

around the bay have looked at Poulton Park as a cheap and convenient dumping site.

It must be admitted that in the short term and without considering the inherent value of Poulton Park, this means of disposal is a little cheaper.

But one cannot make a broadly based, rational decision by ignoring half the community costs involved.

Losing bushland

Both areas are getting scarcer each year in big urban complexes such as Sydney. They are being swallowed up by housing developments, road and freeway building, and by devel-

Commonsense expert's plea

opment in some cases for active recreation use.

These uses have to be judged on their merits and a balance arrived at.

But it is clear that we are continuing to lose large and precious bush areas, and this will lead to a real loss in the quality of life in Sydney.

Conservationists realise they must justify their wishes to preserve bushland. There are many reasons why it is needed. Bushland provides an adventure playground for young children. One has only to speak to the children playing in

areas such as Poulton Park to realise the value they place on such an opportunity.

Another quality of bushland is the visual relief it gives in areas dominated by buildings and other man-made objects. Bushland provides the necessary habitat or living area for a multitude of native insects, animals and plants.

One of the most utilitarian values of bushland in general and Poulton Park in particular is that it is an exceptionally useful tool for educational purposes.

Environmental education and the associated field studies are becoming ever more important in the school curriculum.

An example of the importance placed on environmental education is to be seen in the fact that the Victorian Government has just given \$20,000 to the Environment Studies Association of Victoria.

If we allow Poulton Park to be submerged under tons of silt we will be severely disadvantaging the children in the St. George area.

The lucky children are the ones who live near teaching resources such as Poulton Park or have the money to travel considerable distances to other areas.



LIME KILN Bay rubbish dumping is developing into a new environment.

row. Destruction of the park will mean it will be only those who can afford to travel who will be able to receive the richness of education which is coming to be expected.

It is the less well off who will suffer most. So it can be seen that Poulton Park is not a useless wasteland.

In fact it has been estimated by a reliable landscape architect that it would cost about \$500,000 to re-create an area like Poulton Park.

The source of conflict may now be a little clearer. Two community interest groups wish to maintain and upgrade two different resources.

But to dump silt in the park would be to destroy one resource in order to marginally reduce the cost of upgrading the other.

What is necessary, of course, is for the silt to be disposed of elsewhere, perhaps by barging to sea. This will almost certainly cost more but it will be worth it.

Besides, even if Poulton Park were to be used as a

dumping ground, in 30 years time when the bay has silted up again, a new council and a new group of citizens will be faced with the same problem.

Departments concerned

But this time they will not have Poulton Park to dump the silt on, nor will they have the opportunity to decide to preserve the bushland.

It will be gone. Thanks to a short term decision now. What do the various government departments think?

All the "quality of life" or environmentally concerned departments, except for the State Pollution Control Commission (SPCC), have indicated that they are very strongly in favour of retaining the bushland of Poulton Park.

But despite this they are not in a position to make a decision. They can merely advise.

The decision that has been taken, up to date, however, has been badly made.

Every year the SPCC wrote to Kogarah Council saying that subject to the granting of approval by other government departments it was granted permission to reclaim a section of Poulton Park.

The council was not given permission to fill the total area it had originally applied for.

It was not allowed to fill above a certain contour and it was not allowed to fill the mangroves.

It is worth noting that the council was directed not to dump on the mangroves at the beginning of the year.

A lot of misunderstanding has developed over the Poulton Park issue, mostly as a result of lack of communication between the various parties.

What is needed now is a conference of reconciliation between the council, all the interested citizens' groups and the various responsible government departments.

In this way I am sure reason and common sense will prevail and we will be able to preserve two valuable resources: Oatley Bay and Poulton Park.

Leader 6/3/74

Conservationists at Poulton Park

POULTON PARK

I was interested in your editorial and article on the Poulton Park meeting (Leader, February 27).

I was at the meeting and would like to make a few comments.

I had gone to the park because I had been informed that some members of the Save Poulton Park Committee were conducting a party of school teachers and children from the St. George area, and a Victorian visitor, over the park in a demonstration of its value as an environmental study area.

I wanted to see what form this class study took. Apart from myself, these were the only persons present who could be described as "conservationists".

Also at the park were five Kogarah aldermen, equipped with a mobile public address system, and a large group of aroused people.

Finding the crowd there, one of the committee and the Victorian visitor attempted to speak to them but, as you reported, they were shouted down.

However, the crowd listened to a good electioneering speech by one of the aldermen and received it well.

One of the teaching nuns in charge of the children then asked that the excursion should not be delayed further, and they left.

The crowd was then addressed by one or two of its members and by another of the aldermen, who was also received with approval.

So much for the meeting. What puzzles me is the strong conviction that "conservationists" are opposed to the clearing of Oatley Bay.

On the contrary, like anyone else who cares to look at the inlet, we have for years consistently argued that this bay is ruinously silted up and should be cleared urgently.

Our only request was that council investigate possible alternative methods of dumping the silt.

What we have objected to is that, in clearing the bay, Poulton Park should be wrecked. How many relatively unspoilt spots still remain in the metropolitan area?

As one of the teachers remarked at the end of the day's tour: "This is not only an excellent environmental study area, but it has the advantage of cost-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LEADER
6 March 1974

ing the kids cents for fares instead of dollars." Why throw this advantage away?
O. WHAITE,
Freeman Avenue,
Oatley.

Teachers' park probe

St Geo Pictorial 20/2/74

INSPECT conducted an environmental education field trip for teachers in Poulton Park, South Hurstville, last weekend.

ST. GEORGE PICTORIAL
20 Feb 1974

The trip was arranged for teachers in the St. George district to show them how local bushland areas could be used to help the education of their students.

INSPECT is the Inquiry into the State of Pollution and Environmental Conservation by the Thoughtful.

With other conservation groups it has opposed Kogarah council's moves to carry out a reclamation project in Poulton Park.

A spokesman for INSPECT, Mr. P. Sutton, said action to prevent the park from being polluted started in June 1971 when high school students presented a report and colour film to an INSPECT seminar showing how factories were polluting Poulton Park.

Further investigations showed that Kogarah Council intended to begin a dredging and filling operation in the park, he said.

The council's intentions were discovered three weeks before council was due to start operations.

In that three weeks INSPECT, Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society

and the Save Poulton Park Committee collected 3000 signatures on a petition and presented it to the council, he said.

The council decided to drop the project but in November 1971, after the council elections, it decided to go ahead with the project.

The dredging and filling of the park was to begin a week after the order was passed by the council, Mr. Sutton said.

In December last year, the Minister for Environmental Control, Mr. J. Beale, told the council that the SPCC had recommended a modified reclamation project be approved.

The new plan excluded eight acres of mangroves from the area to be filled but otherwise included all the lower areas of Poulton Park, he said.

Six major environments, including INSPECT wrote a letter of protest to the SPCC complaining that no time had been given environmental groups to prepare an environmental impact study.

The SPCC has not replied so far, Mr. Sutton said.

**CHILDREN'S SHEET DRAWN UP BY PHIL HALL ON
BEHALF OF OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA
AS PART OF POULTON PARK CAMPAIGN 1972**

A DRAWING OF A DUCK WAS FOLLOWED BY THIS TEXT

My name is Derek and I am a wild duck. I live with lots of my friends in Poulton Park, South Hurstville. I live in amongst the mangrove trees where I paddle around in the water and walk around the mud looking for my dinner. I like squishing my toes in the mud. I bet you do too. Some silly grown-ups think mud and mangroves are useless. But we know better, don't we? We know that if you don't have mangroves and mud, we wouldn't have any fish or prawns for dinner because mangroves are their nurseries. And, of course, there would be no nice friendly ducks like me.

Do you know that there are some grown-up people who want to kill my mangroves? Wouldn't you think grown-ups would have more sense? If they do kill my mangroves, I will have to go away and I like living at Poulton Park.

If you want to help save my home, colour in my picture and ask your Mummy or Daddy to mail it to –

Mayor Cavanough, Kogarah Municipal Council
PO Box 22, Kogarah 2217

Maybe if those grown-ups at the Council get lots of nice pictures of me, they will want to help me too.

Your friend,
Derek

PS. Why don't you come and see me at the park some time soon. Maybe your Daddy will bring you.

MOORE RESERVE

While the conflict raged over the infilling of Lime Kiln Bay and Poulton Park, another Oatley bay was being filled by Kogarah Council with relatively little protest – 12 hectares of the north-west arm of Oatley Bay known as Moore Reserve. Work on this shallow inlet had begun before OFF's formation in 1956 at a time when there was general acceptance that mangrove stands were unpleasant mosquito-infested places and therefore ideal for the cheap disposal of local garbage. Some residents fringing the bay were unhappy with aspects of the on-going work being done in the 1960s and 1970s, but OFF and residents' groups did not become really involved in protests until 1977 when filling had been completed and a conflict developed about whether the grassed and levelled area should be used for passive or active recreation.

The original plan to reclaim Oatley Bay dates from 1936 when Council planned to create parkland from the mangrove swamps. Little action was taken until after World War 2. In 1946 Council borrowed £40,000 (\$80,000) to finance this scheme as well as the reclamation work at Carss Park. Work progressed slowly. By 1955, a causeway had been constructed across the mouth of north-west arm using garbage fill to the level of 5 metres. The mud flats and mangroves behind the causeway were then filled to a level of about 3 m using mud dredged from Oatley Bay. This dredging ceased in March 1967. Meanwhile, Renown Park at the upper end of the bay was being created by dumping garbage and earth fill. From 1964 the section of the valley above Seymour Street was filled to a depth of 4-8 m with matter that included putrescible waste.

From 1967 to 1970, Moore Reserve had a platform created on top of the dredged mud fill using building refuse and old vehicles. Then between 1970 and 1975, this was topped with waste another 3-8 m thick. As early as July 1971, Mr Lindsay, Kogarah Council's Engineer told the Council that the dredged mud was "difficult to control. After four years it is still moving. It has never dried out. All the mud in the tip is moving under the garbage and I don't know how we can control this". (Council meeting, 5 July). On completion of each section of filling, the areas were covered with a layer of soil for growing grass. Renown Park was already grassed by 1975 and Moore Reserve soon after tipping ceased in July 1977.

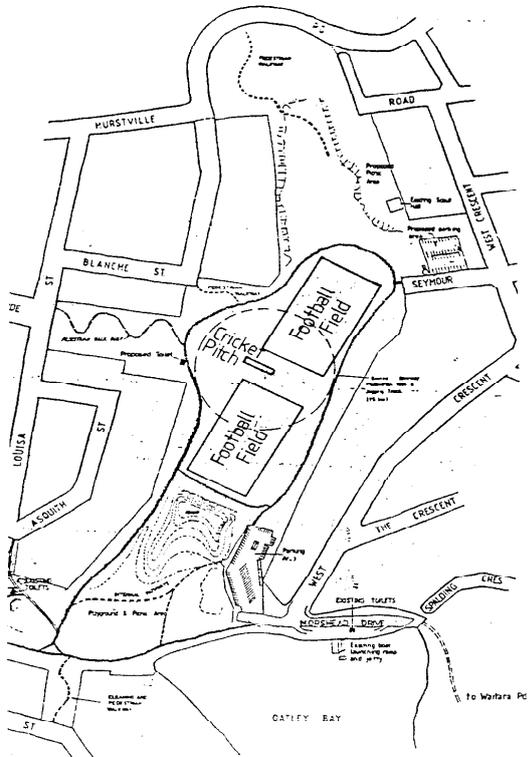
No accurate records were kept of the type or volume of waste material used. It is estimated that 357,000 tonnes of rubbish were

dumped. As the landfill was not well monitored or well designed, serious environmental problems soon occurred. These included leachate containing high levels of zinc, lead, chromium and mercury which moved with the ground water through the soil to pollute the bay and gases (largely methane) produced by the decomposition of organic material. In April 1977, to the intense annoyance of Council, Frank Walker, while Acting Minister for Planning and Environment, placed an Interim Development Order (IDO) on the site stopping all further work. However, the tipping was now almost completed and as from 1st July 1977 all local household waste was to be trucked to the Menai Tip. Council decided to close Moore Reserve to waste dumping from 31st July.

From the middle of 1977, there began the conflict over what to do with the filled area. At a community meeting in June, the majority voted for passive recreation. At the same time the Council Engineer was authorised to purchase filling from the Westfield development in Hurstville for the purpose of covering the tipped material. Although no work could proceed because of the IDO, a meeting was held on 10 October at Frank Walker's Mortdale office to discuss passive versus active usage and the nature and extent of the landscaping. Interested groups from both sides attended, including Oatley Bay Residents' Group (Ray Gervasoni), Kogarah Council, Oatley RSL and others. OFF was represented by Harry Whaite.

By mid 1988, following a change in the State Government, Kogarah Council sought to lift the IDO and determine the use of the reserve. There was strong lobbying from various sporting groups and Council's preferred option was clearly to construct two playing fields and a cricket pitch. Susan Gainsford, Alderman of Kogarah Council and an OFF member, was one who strongly believed that the area should be kept for passive recreation. The OFF committee made an inspection of the reserve and confirmed its decision to support the local residents' wishes for passive recreation. The Society produced a pamphlet which was letter-boxed, headed "Do You Want Football Fields Behind Your House?" opposing Council's plans and urging a solution where the reserve would remain passive, with plantings of native trees and shrubs. This would be a rare opportunity to provide much needed open space in a Municipality which was below average in regards to the provision of passive open space.

DO YOU WANT FOOTBALL FIELDS BEHIND YOUR HOUSE ?



One of Kogarah Council's development options for Moore Reserve is to construct two playing fields and a cricket pitch.

At present, Interim Development Order No 16 prevents such developments, but Kogarah Council is seeking to have this development order lifted. We believe that in the interests of local residents and of the Municipality in general the playing field option must be strongly opposed.

Moore Reserve must remain a passive recreation area, with plantings of native trees and shrubs to beautify the area (Option E in Council's development options).

This a rare opportunity to provide much needed open space in the Municipality. Local Government figures show that Kogarah Municipality is below the Sydney average in regards to the provision of open space. 72% of Kogarah's parkland is already playgrounds or sporting fields. With one playing field for every 792 Kogarah resident between the ages of 5 and 29, Kogarah is well served with open space for organized sporting activities.

Playing fields will increase noise levels, make parking more difficult and increase the incidence of vandalism. But they will also remove the potential for the area to be a first-class, beautiful reserve for all those unorganized activities for which it is now used.

Express your views to Council NOW:

Write to: The Town Clerk, Municipality of Kogarah, Civic Centre, KOGARAH.2217.

Authorized by: Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society, P.O.Box 52, MORTDALE.2223.

No playing fields were constructed and only some basic landscaping was carried out. In 1993, Council commissioned consultants to prepare a plan of Management for Moore Reserve setting out some general planning guidelines. In November 1997, a

landscape architect firm produced a Draft Masterplan, which was a more detailed proposal for rehabilitation of the reserve. Aspects of this Masterplan met with community disapproval, especially the depiction of a tall structure with a large methane flare on top. Local residents formed a group called The Moore Reserve Group and protested at the Council meeting of 30 April 1998. In reaction, Council held a Community Forum on 30 April and a Community Workshop on 2 July at which the design for ponds and rehabilitation work were presented. Off was represented at all these public meetings. This work went ahead and the newly constructed wetland pondage was officially opened on 6 April 2002.

Work to overcome the environmental problems associated with rubbish tipping and infilling of the mangroves includes bushland restoration of the wooded slopes and substantial plantings of native shrubs and trees. OFF was once again successful in obtaining National Heritage and Coastcare Grants for these projects. The new wetlands have been successful in bringing back waterbirds to the area. All this is a much better outcome than the Council's playing field option. However, the problems caused by the initial work have not gone away and there are still fears of gas escape and contaminated water seeping into the Georges River (*Leader*, 9 Oct 2003).



A Great Victory At Oatley

The announcement that Oatley Park is to be spared from the intrusion of power transmission lines will be welcomed by everyone in this district.

Oatley Park is the miniature National Park conveniently placed only a few minutes' drive from most St George homes, where you can take your car, park it free of charge and picnic alongside it. Facilities include sports field, enclosed swimming area and constructed fireplaces.

A cloud has hung over the park's future with the threat of a great gash being gouged across it to erect power lines. The park is not large and quite a big proportion of the natural bush would have been destroyed.

Fortunately for the Sunday picnickers, someone has come to their rescue, and full marks go to Transport Minister Mr Morris for being able to persuade the Railways Department to reverse an earlier decision. It is something unusual to see a Government department make alterations to prepared plans.

More important, the Sunday picnickers have the local conservation group, the Oatley Flora and Fauna Society, to thank for looking after their interests. This is just one of many organisations who are playing such a prominent part in preserving our parks from serious damage or destruction.

The disappearance of vacant land from the city has meant that public utilities now turn their eyes to parks when expansion of their facilities are called for. Generally this is the cheapest way out, but quite often for little extra expense the damage can be avoided.

Let us hope that this decision will set the lead and all Government departments will look for ways of avoiding intrusion on park lands for their expansion plans.

At the same time, let us pay tribute to these conservation groups who are playing such an important part in standing guard over these too few remaining parks.

Other Activities in the 1970s

The decade opened with *The Propeller* newspaper announcing “A Great Victory At Oatley” (28 January 1970). It reported that an attempt to have high tension power lines with associated stanchions routed through Oatley Park had been defeated and the lines were to be re-routed. These power lines were being constructed for the new railway bridge across Georges River and threatened to cause serious damage to Oatley Park by carving a swathe of cleared land through the middle of the park. After protests by OFF and others, the Minister for Transport, Mr Morris, had been able to persuade the Railways Department to reverse their previous decision. *The Propeller* stated that “*Sunday picnickers have the local conservation group, the Oatley Flora and Fauna Society, to thank for looking after their interests. This is just one of many organizations who are playing such a prominent part in preserving our parks from serious damage or destruction...Let us pay tribute to these conservation groups who are playing such an important part in standing guard over these too few remaining parks.*”

Another more positive activity was occurring in Oatley Park in 1970. At the suggestion of OFF, scientists from the Entomology Branch of the CSIRO used the park for biological control experiments on the white wax scale which was infesting many of the shrubs, especially Hop Bushes (*Dodonaea triquetra*). The CSIRO had been searching for a suitable place for the breeding of a wasp to control this scale and Oatley Park was eminently suitable for this project. The scale was a native of Africa where it was kept under control by a tiny wasp. The wasp had been brought to Australia and was ready for release and testing as a biological control, so with Hurstville Council’s permission, Oatley Park became a living laboratory. The experiment was successful and the wasp was collected after three years and sold to orchardists. By November 1985, the wax scale had almost disappeared from the park as had the wasp. Following the work on the scale, a CSIRO officer recommended that koalas be introduced to the park from Phillip Island, Victoria. He believed that the park could support about 12 pairs. Nothing came of this recommendation.

A list of the Society’s activities in the 1970s shows a clear focus on Oatley Park. There were annual clean-up days in the park and tree plantings for Earth Week. Letters were sent to Council expressing concern about the damage bikes were doing to the park bushland

(1973 and 1975). In 1975, the Society drew up a Draft Management Plan for Oatley Park which was mostly accepted by Hurstville Council. To better understand the visitor dynamics of the park, the Society conducted surveys of people entering the park in July 1975 and March 1976. This was followed by two more surveys in 1979, one in winter and one in summer, each on a Sunday. On the first Sunday in 1979, 2767 people entered the park and on the second 1979 people entered. Some of this good work and co-operation with Council was off-set in early 1978 when Council workers used a bull-dozer to create a fire break along the Dame Mary Gilmore boundary of the park with disastrous results. Council admitted its mistake but the area was laid bare and took years of mulching and replanting to even partially restore the area.

ST. GEORGE PICTORIAL 15 MAY 1974

Park is being just

Oatley Park is being loved to death according to St. George environment expert, Mr. A. Fairley.

Mr Fairley, author of several publications about Sydney's bushlands and a spokesman for the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society, said the park was one of the few bushland recreational areas in the district and was used by thousands of people each weekend.

"Oatley Park is suffering both from over-use and misuse which threatens its existence as a natural recreation area.

"The management committee of the society is concerned at the erosion and denuding of native vegetation in many parts of the Park.

Study guides for teachers

Because of the intense usage the park is slowly being destroyed.

"Some areas badly needed to be closed temporarily to the public to allow them to regenerate.

"Hurstville Council had closed badly damaged areas to cars by placing large stones across trails.

"Little had been done to discourage mini-bikes which cause great damage. Vandals who destroyed signs and park fittings were also a problem."

Mr. Fairley, who is a high school teacher, said Oatley Park was potentially a fine open class room for nature studies.

"A plan of management was needed to keep the present balance between natural areas and those reserved for picnics and sporting facilities," he said.

"To enable teachers to make better use of Oatley Park for environment studies, the society is preparing printed study guides on the plant and animal life of the park for distribution to schools in St. George area."

A massive clean-up of the park would be conducted on Saturday, June 8.

Anyone wishing to assist in either project should telephone the secretary, Mrs. I. Carder on 57 5909.

Pictured: Large stones block the entry to a badly denuded area in Oatley Park.

'loved to death'



OATLEY PARK

1975-76

Tree planting aids in park restoration



A tree-planting ceremony at Oatley Park, to coincide with Earth Week, marks the beginning of a regeneration program to restore vegetation in areas damaged by cars.

Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society president (Mr Alan Fairley) is pictured giving a tree for planting to the Mayor of Hurstville (Ald N. Bergin). From left are Ian White, Amanda Loew, Ald Joan Loew, Ald Bergin, Ald G. Foster, Mr Fairley and Aid R. Swanton.

Mr Fairley congratulated Hurstville Council on its action in closing on its damaged areas of the park.

"Although some areas have been left bare from over-use, better-defined car parking areas and the planting of trees will help preserve the park's naturalness," he said.

Great asset

The Mayor praised the society's work, particularly its interest in Oatley Park.

He stressed the importance of the park as an area for picnics and passive recreation — "an important bushland area for the whole Georges River area and a great asset to the people of Hurstville Municipality."

Ald. Bergin, Ald. Loew, Ald. Swanton and Ald. Foster and two members of the Hurstville Junior Council — Amanda Loew (Town Clerk) and Ian White (Deputy Mayor) — all planted native trees.

Theme of Earth Week was "Plant a tree today for a cleaner, greener tomorrow."

Local people main users of Oatley Park

More than 900 vehicles were stopped and 2767 people questioned at Oatley Park on a recent Sunday.

They were asked why they had come, and what they intended doing there.

It was nothing as dramatic as a police dragnet but just a survey to establish the popularity and use of the 45 ha natural bush park.

Authorised by the trustees, Hurstville Council, it was conducted by Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society with the assistance of scouts.

The society is concerned at the destruction of undergrowth in many areas by cars and mini-bikes.

It is also worried by the amount of firewood—collected or cut from the park.

It hopes the exhaustively detailed survey will form the basis of a management plan to preserve the park.

The society's public relations officer, Mrs W. Tonkin, said visitors cooperated cheerfully in the nine-hour survey.

Many were curious to know the results.

The survey showed that most visitors, 64.5 per cent, were from Hurstville.

Admission to the park is free, Mrs Tonkin said.

It was therefore appropriate that it was so well patronised by local people.

As ratepayers they helped pay for its facilities and upkeep.

Barbecues

According to the survey most people went to the park for organised sport (27 per cent), barbecues and picnics (26 per cent), and motorised sightseeing (29 per cent).

On this Sunday, the 2767 people entered the park in 832 cars and on 89 motorcycles or bicycles.

A surprisingly high percentage of vehicles (almost 40 per cent) carried four or more people.

The largest proportion interviewed (33 per cent) intended to remain there for two to six hours.

Fifteen per cent proposed staying either half or a full day.

Results of the survey have been forwarded to Hurstville Council.

Above : Leader newspaper, 20 August 1975

Two more threats to the park emerged by the mid 1970s. In 1975, the Oatley Swimming Association proposed an Olympic sized pool within the park. Protest letters and on-site meetings with Council Engineers and Ward Aldermen helped defeat this proposal. But in April 1977, a more serious threat came from a Scout Association request to build a 2-storey boatshed for water activities, storage of

kayaks and educational facilities over the beach near Oatley Baths wharf. This project had high-powered backing and even received a grant of \$30,000 from the Department of Sport and Recreation. While defending the park's natural values as outlined in the Management Plan, the Society was accused of being anti-scout and of inhibiting healthy youth activity. Approval in principle was given to the boatshed by Hurstville Council on 4 July 1977 but construction was delayed because of questions of who controlled the land and who could give consent. As the building was to be constructed between high and low tides level, the Lands Department not Hurstville Council seemed to be the consent authority. OFF put its views directly to the Lands Department when Bill Hall visited the Department in August 1977. He was assured that only the Lands Department could give approval and that it had no intention of doing so. The matter continue to resurface in 1978 and 1979 and in August 1983 the Georges River Training Centre was reported to be still negotiating with the Maritime Services Board regarding a floating boat storage and a mooring point for craft in Jewfish Bay. However, the proposal eventually faded away.

Education remained an important objective of the Society and monthly meetings continued to have expert speakers on matters of environmental interest. Attendances at meetings sometimes reached 100. In June 1972, meetings were moved from the Swimming Club to the Methodist (Uniting) Church Hall, corner of Gungah Bay and Mulga Roads, West Oatley. *OFF News*, edited by Olive Whaite (1972-75) and Betty Weekes (1976-83), remained the chief vehicle for education and information. In 1975, a booklet on Oatley Park, study sheets (*My Environment*) for school students and a leaflet on the Headland Nature Walk in Oatley Park were written by Alan Fairley (then OFF President). Financial assistance was provided by Hurstville Council for the printing of the booklet and leaflet. Surveys of plants and birds of Oatley Park were made and lists drawn up. The Society also put on displays at Roselands for Earth Week which promoted the Society beyond the Oatley area. To celebrate the Society's 21st Anniversary, a dinner was held in November 1976, with 96 people attending. This was the precursor to future Annual Dinners.

INVITATION!!

NATURE FILMS

INVITATION!!

Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society

would like you to come to a film night

MONDAY, 22nd OCTOBER at 7.45 p.m.

at METHODIST CHURCH HALL

Cnr. Mulga Road and Gungah Bay Road, Oatley W.

FILMS: ANIMALS OF AFRICA

EVOLUTION ON ALDABRA ISLAND

The films were taken and will be shown by CLIFF & SHEILA WHITE.

These are outstanding films and this will be a rare opportunity for you to see them. No charge. Come as our welcome guests. *This invitation is issued as part of our EARTH WEEK project.* Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society meets in the Methodist Church Hall on 4th Monday of each month. Lectures, Films, Field Days. Membership: Adults \$2, Juniors 20 cents — but visitors are always welcome.

If you are interested in further information, tear off and send the following:
To: The Secretary, P.O. Box 52, Mordale 2223.
Please send further information.

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....
.....

Telephone:.....

Other local issues beyond Oatley Park included inspection and reporting on the condition of street trees, weed control in bushland, opposing the tennis court construction in Scarborough Park and organising a Symposium on the Georges River (29 October 1972). In September 1972, concerned about the rate at which the suburb's trees were being destroyed, OFF offered to mark on a map trees with special importance so they could receive special protection. In July 1979, the Society urged the protection of the trees in Mulga Road "as an outstanding example of natural landscaping in an urban setting". The issue of the removal of indigenous trees from the area is one which continues to the present day. Twenty years before it happened, OFF member Norm Tonkin discussed the mechanics and advantages of a ponding system in Lime Kiln Bay at a meeting with Ward Aldermen and the Council Deputy Engineer called by OFF.

Significant changes had occurred on the committee in the early 1970s. Beatrice Goldstein (Publicity Officer and first Newsletter Editor) left the district. She was replaced as Editor by Ida Carder in September 1970; Ida became Hon Secretary in 1972, a position she held until the end of 1982. Vice-president Bill Keech retired at the end of 1970 and Doris Newbould (Hon Secretary, 1959-67) retired at the end of 1971. Taking up the challenge on the committee were a group of dedicated people, many of whom would remain on the committee for several years. Of special note were Harry Whaite (Hon Treasurer 1972-92), Olive Whaite (Newsletter Editor 1973-75, Vice-president 1976-79), Val Boyan (Field Officer 1970-82), Alan Fairley (President 1975-77, Vice-president 1978-2004, Newsletter Editor 1984-2003), Susan Heins (Vice-president/Publicity Officer 1973-81), Win Tonkin (1971-75), Nes Grundy (1967-81) and Gwen Helman (1973-79). With 33 years on the committee from 1970 to 2002, Val Boyan is the Society's longest serving committee member.

Away from the home front, members were at this time involved in numerous other activities, including work parties at Wirrimbirra Sanctuary (Bargo), door knock appeals for National Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and attendance at Georges River Symposium and Nature Conservation Council conferences. An examination of *OFF News* and correspondence shows that the Society concerned itself with the major conservation issues of the time. These included opposition to Clutha coal dumps, an airport proposal in Duffys Forest, Terania Creek rainforest, Wollemi National Park, oil drilling on Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island, Botany Ponds, Botany Bay Port development, sand mining of beaches and Myall Lakes, sand extraction from Grose River, Tasmanian wilderness, the formation of an Environmental Advisory Service within the Education Department, use of 1080 poison in national parks, Central Coast sewage system, woodchipping, whaling licences, the route of the natural gas pipeline through the Blue Mountains, Kellys Falls protection and Environmental planning in N.S.W.

The decade ended on a positive note. In September 1979, Hurstville Council approved an Oatley Park Advisory Committee as suggested by the Society in 1978. OFF was strongly represented on this committee. Dredging had stopped at Poulton Park, Lime Kiln Bay had been partly saved and the Water Activity Centre in Oatley Park was all but rejected. The Society was active both locally and on the wider scene. Membership remained at over 200

people and attendances at meetings averaged nearly 50. Field days were especially popular, averaging 38 participants per month. With a stable committee of long-serving people, all was set for another successful decade of community activity.

Park group opposes burn-off policies

Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society and the National Trust say one virtually extinct Australian plant would be killed outright if controlled burns go ahead in Oatley Park.

The plant is *tetratheca neglecta*, commonly called black-eyed susan.

Trust spokesman, Mr. Graham Quint, said there are five black-eyed susans in Oatley Park and one in Oatley Heights Park, the only known plants left in the area.

The plants, which are only found south of Sydney Harbor, once grew in the Canterbury, Kogarah and Hurstville municipalities and the Sutherland Shire.

However, bush clearing for housing in Canterbury and Kogarah had wiped most of them out and the Oatley black-eyed susans are the only remaining on that side of the Georges River.

Mr Quint said he had

By CAROLINE GLADSTONE

written to Hurstville Council asking that these plants be saved from the proposed controlled burns, but although the council had written back regarding the burns, it had not mentioned the rare plant.

Mr Quint has also written to the Board of Fire Commissioners with the same request.

Other rare plants threatened include a patch of ferns growing on the southern road beside the rock face.

The patch about a metre wide includes a rare orchid.

Both groups also fear for some rainforest species growing in what Mr Quint calls the fireshadow area, directly above the baths.

"These trees are not fire prone — that is they don't contain oil in their leaves, which makes many plants flammable," he said.

"They are rainforest plants with damp, soft, leaves which would act like a wet blanket during a fire," Mr Quint said.

Mr Quint would like to see the flammable trees in that area cleared, leaving only the "wet blanket trees".

This would make control burns unnecessary.

The Society is totally against control burning.

"A burn would destroy all the bush regeneration work the Trust has undertaken in this park over the last three years," society secretary, Lesley Cox said.

She believes the burns will aggravate the bush-fire risk.

"After control burns there is a lot of regrowth."

"Weeds take seed as many people come and dump their lawn clippings and other garden refuse on the side of the road," she said.

Rare flower is at serious risk



MEMBERS of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society were on hand at Mallard Drive, Oatley Park last week to show one area that would be burnt in a control burn. Pictured with a profusion of native flannel flowers are (from left) Lesley Cox, Tess Akkersdyk, Gwen Helman, a society member for 20 years and Pat Akkersdyk.

"It doesn't matter how big the fire break is, a bushfire would jump it anyway," she said.

At its meeting last month Hurstville Council agreed with the Board of Fire Commissioners' recommendation to control burns to minimise bush-fire risk.

The Board recommended control burn strips of 10 to 20 metres wide alongside Mallard Drive, and the southern drive leading from Douglas Haig Street to the circular drive near Websters Lookout.

It also proposed to burn strips of the same width near isolated picnic areas.

Above : The Leader newspaper article 19 November 1985

CHAPTER 5 1980s : INCREASING COMMUNITY **AWARENESS**

The 1980s was a period of increasing threats to the environment but also increasing community awareness that action had to be taken to prevent further damage. Thus the decade saw the rise of many environmental action groups in both Australia and overseas. Locally, Councils began to respond to community concerns in a more positive manner, developing programs and policies to better protect the natural assets under their control. Councils tentatively began a period of co-operation with organizations like OFF rather than being in direct conflict with them. Differences in priorities and attitudes still arose, but in both Hurstville and Kogarah Municipalities, this co-operation was facilitated by having OFF members as Aldermen on both Councils. Relieved of the time-consuming local battles which marked the 1970s, the OFF committee could devote more time and money to supporting other environmental groups involved in bushland protection around Sydney and give moral support through letters, petitions and information about the issues to conservation groups throughout the rest of Australia and the world.

A practical example of Hurstville Council's more positive attitude was the establishment of the Oatley Park Advisory Committee (OPAC), formed to oversee Oatley Park. Julian Sheen, who was Deputy Mayor of Hurstville Council at the time, promoted the idea, discussed it with OFF and steered it through both the Labor caucus and Council. It consisted of two representatives from Council, two elected ratepayers and five appointed members. A packed public meeting (chaired by Julian Sheen) held on 27 February 1980 created the committee, the good attendance reflecting the community's concern with the park's maintenance and regeneration. Five OFF members were on the first committee. Alderman Julian Sheen was Chairman, Graham Quint was Secretary/Treasurer, John Blacker and Tricia Koffel (Deputy Chair) were elected by the public meeting, and Val Argall was one of the appointed members.

The OPAC took a keen interest in all aspects of the park's management and could boast a number of achievements over four years. It strongly resisted the proposed Water Activities Centre, rejected a proposal to enclose the Castle for a works storeroom, encouraged Council to retain the National Trust bush regeneration,

requested mulching and re-planting of cleared areas, sought the distribution of information on bush regeneration in *Council Comment*, placed boom gates across the narrow road down to the Causeway, got Council to leave timber off-cuts for barbecues to reduce removal of timber from the bush, convinced Council to levy a \$2 entry fee per car to the park on Sundays to help pay for park upkeep (trialled from Dec 1982 to June 1983, then dropped), highlighted problems of damage being done by illegal trail bike riders, upgraded toilets and kiosk facilities at the oval, moderated and reduced hazard reduction burning and urged Council to improve parking and directional traffic signs within the park. In 1981, OPAC opened the first nature trail in Oatley Park, named the Headland Track, and printed a leaflet on the track written by OFF's Alan Fairley. The nature trail was officially opened by Mayor Gary Punch.

In 1982, the Advisory Committee encouraged Council to build a barrier fence around the oval, put a gate on the lower fire trail and provide numbered stopping points along the Headland Track. Council also gave approval for a team of National Trust-trained bush regenerators to work in Oatley Park using the slow but thorough methods evolved by Joan and Eileen Bradley. In 1983, the OPAC committee had 7 OFF representatives – Julian Sheen (Chair), Tricia Koffel (Secretary/Treasurer), Val Argall, John Blacker, Jean Burg, Graham Quint and Keith Underwood. However, despite all its good work, the Advisory Committee was disbanded in June 1984, chiefly due to the lack of support and co-operation by Council aldermen and its officers who frequently carried out work in the park without reference to the committee. Indeed, without even bothering to inform OPAC, the Council had taken steps to disband the committee at its meeting on 8 Nov 1983 and had withdrawn its representatives. Hence, all correspondence from the committee to the Council went unanswered for several months.

A front page headline in the *Leader* newspaper of 4 July 1984 declared : “We resign, says Park Committee” and “ Council ‘frustrates’ Oatley group”. The paper reported that Oatley Park Advisory Committee had voted itself out of existence rather than continue what it saw as an exercise in futility. The OPAC Secretary, Tricia Koffel, is quoted as saying that communication between the committee and council had broken down completely, aldermanic representation had become a token and the council's engineering department was a major stumbling block as “for the

most part, they think a park is green grass with goal posts at either end." After the demise of OPAC, National Trust bush regeneration continued and OFF maintained its vigilance regarding the management of this valuable natural area.

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Council 'frustrates' Oatley group

¹ Its secretary, Tricia Koffel, said the committee had been frustrated at every turn by council indifference and obstruction, and members felt further efforts were pointless.

She said communication between committee and council had broken down completely and the council either ignored, or took the opposite course of action to recommendations put to it.

Members felt the original concept of the committee — to represent views of various park use groups — had failed and more would be achieved by returning to individual lobbying of council.

"We are not really serving a purpose," she said.

"Perhaps if the council has six or seven people screaming in its ear it will take more notice."

Mrs Koffel said the committee's role had also been ridiculed and down-

² Aldermanic representation had become token since the last election, Mrs Koffel said.

She said a committee proposal for signposting and marking a section of one-way road in the park for a bike and jogging track had not even received an answer from the council.

A recommendation to levy a gate charge to cover the cost of a National Trust bush regeneration program had also not been acted on.

Mrs Koffel said lack of co-operation from the council's engineering department had been a major stumbling block for the committee.

"For the most part they think a park is green grass with goal posts at either end," she said.

Mrs Koffel said Oatley Park was the municipality's only natural bushland reserve and therefore required special upkeep.

We resign, says Park Committee

Oatley Park Advisory Committee has ¹ ~~resigned~~ itself out of existence rather than continue what it sees as an exercise in futility.

The 12-member committee, formed four years ago to advise Hurstville Council on park matters, ² ~~resigned~~ unanimously at its June meeting to disband.

³ ~~resigned~~ in certain council circles.

"We kept hearing that we were a bunch of maniacs just trying to create trouble. I feel we have been unfairly treated," she said.

When formed in 1980, the committee had consisted of 10 members, including two aldermen.



Mrs Koffel

In 1985-86, OFF was critical of hazard reduction burning in Oatley Park carried out by the Fire Brigade at the request of Council. About 12 % of the park was burnt. The criticism was based on scientific evidence that pointed to long-term damage to urban bushland from too frequent burning, such as weed invasion and changes to the vegetation patterns and existing ecology of the park. In addition, the efforts of the National Trust in bush regeneration would be wasted. OFF also objected to the lack of consultation and Council's ignoring of the implications of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act which stated that any "diminution of the aesthetic, recreational, scientific or other value of a locality" must be taken into consideration by public authorities before they act. In May 1986, OFF issued a press release criticising hazard reduction burning in Oatley Park on the grounds that such burning was in conflict with the spirit of the Draft Policy on Urban Bushland.

In 1980-81, OFF member Julian Sheen was a Hurstville Council Alderman and presented a conservation viewpoint in the course of his aldermanic duties. Julian converted this viewpoint into such practical results as having Council print 30,000 copies of a Tree Brochure, encouraging planting and protection of native trees, and getting \$5000 allocated for a National Trust survey of bushland areas in Hurstville Municipality. At the same time, another OFF member, Susan Gainsford, was a Kogarah Council Alderman and was encouraging allocation of funds for bush regeneration work in Oatley Point Reserve and Oatley Pleasure Grounds, work which continued until 1986. The Society was pleased with these efforts and, in contrast with the feeling towards Kogarah Council in the 1970s, was able to compliment the Council on its “progressive attitude towards improvement of their natural reserves.”

The number and diversity of activities involving OFF members (especially committee members) increased as environmental issues become more varied and the need for publicity and education more important. There were annual door knock appeals for National Parks & Wildlife Foundation (in 1981, \$765 was raised by members), attendance at a Bush Regeneration School organised by the National Trust (1980), Save the Rainforest rallies (1982), an inspection of the Georges River organised by the Combined Councils (1983), the development of a policy on the Uranium Industry in Australia (1984), monthly Oatley Park flower study days under the guidance of Nancy Beattie and Pat Akkersdyk, National Parks Week displays at Westfield, submissions against Council tree lopping (1986), examination of the effectiveness of Tree Preservation Orders (1988), representing the Society at Youth Activity Expo in Oatley Park (1988), representation at the Water Board Forum on the Environment (1989), joining the Hurstville Heritage and Environment Association (1989) and support for the Coalition for Urban Transport Sanity (1989).

Annual Dinners became a feature of OFF's yearly program, with 90 to 110 people attending each year. These had an educational as well as social function with quality guest speakers invited to attend. These speakers included Fay Sutton (Australian Conservation Foundation) in 1981, Peter Prineas (NPA) in 1982, Chris Pratten (NCC) in 1983 and Neville Gare (Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service) at the Society's 30th Anniversary Annual Dinner in 1985 (speaking on the development of Kosciusko National Park). The Hon. Bob Carr, MLA and then

Minister for Planning and Environment, was guest at the Annual Dinner in October 1986. Mr Carr gave an inspiring talk urging members to aim for excellence and pointing out that N.S.W. had the unique opportunity to develop a conservation record which would be the envy of the world.

Other activities became annual events. These included the Oatley Lions Festivals at Oatley where OFF had a stall to promote environmental activity and publicise the Society; two delegates to the Nature Conservation Council's Annual Conference; and an Oatley Park Clean-up day. From 1986, some members spent a week each January at Smiggin Holes, Kosciusko National Park. A weekend camp-out also became a tradition. In November 1985, over 30 members and friends set up camp in the Currarong caravan park and explored Point Perpendicular, Jervis Bay and Abrahams Bosom Reserve. In 1986, the weekend camp was at Blackheath. In 1987, 40 people spent a weekend at Glen Davis, in 1988, 22 people camped at Mill Creek in Dharug National Park and in 1989, there was another successful camp-out at Coolendel beside the Shoalhaven River.

By 1984, it was clear that the Society's library was no longer serving its original purpose as a reference source for members. Betty Hall, the librarian, reported only 37 books had been borrowed that year by members. Either members had read all the books, had their own copies or could readily obtain them from local libraries. Betty questioned the value of continuing the service and in the following year, all Society books were transferred to Hurstville Municipal Library where they became the Myles J. Dunphy Memorial Collection. In 1986, after 30 years of Society activity, OFF's archives were presented to Hurstville Municipal Library where they could be properly stored, indexed and available for public use. These archives were (and still are) a valuable record of the Society's involvement in local and other conservation battles and contain letters, committee minutes, newsletters and AGM reports, as well as files on specific issues, such as Lime Kiln Bay, Poulton Park and street trees.

At the Annual General Meeting of 1982, an amendment was made to the Society's Constitution to more clearly define the objectives of the Society. The objectives approved by the meeting were :

*To stimulate interest in Australian Flora and Fauna,
to foster an understanding of the need to conserve*

natural resources, and to co-operate with other societies in protecting the environment.

Co-operating with other societies became an important activity of OFF. As the decade progressed, a variety of resident action groups were formed by people who wanted a greater say in what was happening to their local environment. Already in Oatley there were resident groups, such as the Lime Kiln Bay Preservation Society, established to fight the infilling of the bays. Elsewhere in Sydney other grass-roots conservation organizations were formed, their specific purpose reflected in their names : Wolli Creek Preservation Society, The Battlers for Kellys Bush, Residents for the Preservation of Quarry Reserve, Friends of Malabar Bush, Friends of Kellys Falls and Friends of the Hacking River. In addition, there were the larger groups with a state or national agenda, such as National Parks Association, South-east Forest Alliance and Australian Conservation Foundation. OFF supported the aims of all these groups, publicising their concerns in the Society newsletter. Following the sudden and unexpected death of our President, John Blacker, in January 1987, the Society set up a special Presidents Fund in his honour to give OFF greater scope for contributing money to these conservation groups which were constantly in need of financial assistance. The fund stood at \$1000 by the end of 1987, and in 1989, \$998 was donated to groups including the Wolli Creek group and South-east Forest Alliance.

An editorial in *OFF News* of January 1984 decried the fact that
conservation battles are never won. There are significant achievements, but these apparent victories are being constantly undermined. Conservationists must be ever alert, ever on guard, to ensure that hard-won gains are not eroded away.

In the following year, there was a call for personal action by members to “do something to bring about change”. These thoughts were prompted by serious threats to existing national parks and increasing pressures on all natural areas. The variety and number of these threats in the 1980s is clearly apparent from a simple list of those issues which OFF took an interest in, wrote letters about and publicised in the monthly *OFF News*.

The issues in which OFF became involved are a representation of the main environmental issues of the 1980s. They included (in chronological order) : Terania Creek Enquiry, the killing of dolphins in Japan, Washpool Wilderness, Plant Variety Rights Bill, recycling, the Botany Engine Ponds (all in 1980); rainforest

protection, Great Barrier Reef, Tasmanian Wilderness, environmental education, urban development problems, sewage and waste disposal (1981); a Marine Park on and around the Great Barrier Reef, Franklin River Dam (1982); vehicles on beaches, ski resorts at Kosciusko, uranium mining, Barrington Tops, degradation of Towra Point and Botany Bay, the proposed Leura Resort (1983); proposed damming of Clyde River, power lines through Wollemi, problems facing Royal National Park, coastal wetlands under threat, Macquarie Marshes, land clearing in western N.S.W., Daintree forest protection, pollution of western rivers (1984); mining in Northern Territory parks, Tasmanian woodchipping, oil spills in Botany Bay, protection of upper Hacking River catchment, Helensburgh development, proposed changes to Environment, Planning and Assessment Act (1985); Far North Coast development, nuclear reactors, saving the N.S.W. beaches, clearfelling of southern forests, industrial development of Kurnell (1986); continuing problems with woodchipping in south-east forests, the wet tropics as a World Heritage site (1987); Kakadu, woodchipping licences, management of Kosciusko National Park, environmental legal aid, heritage listing of Tasmania's forests (1988).

Within the Society, there were changes in November 1985 to update membership categories. "Family" and "Adult" were replaced by "Household", the subscription fee being \$5.00 per annum. The mixture of rates for students, pensioners and unemployed were replaced by a single "Concession" category at \$2.50 per annum. In the mid 1980s, it was not uncommon to have 90 people at monthly meetings, so it was recognised that the Society was outgrowing the seating capacity in the hall at West Oatley. A move was made to a new venue, the hall of the Uniting Church, Frederick Street, Oatley, where the first meeting was held in October 1986 and 85 people were treated to a fascinating glimpse of some remote areas of Australia presented by Milo Dunphy, AM, probably the best known conservationist in N.S.W. and an Oatley resident.

1988 not only marked 200 years of European settlement in Australia but also 100 years since the proclamation of Oatley Park. The Society printed a special edition of *OFF News* (May) to commemorate this event and pointed out the presence of three rare and endangered plant species in the park. Hurstville Council reprinted 5000 copies of the Headland Track leaflet. A more positive burning program occurred in Oatley Park in 1988 when

the National Trust set alight to small strips of bushland to carry out research on the germination of native plants. Harry Whaité attended as an observer for the Society.



OATLEY Flora and Fauna Society members, from left, Keith and June Underwood and Alan Fairley, the only people celebrating Oatley Park's 100th birthday.

Park centenary goes out with a whimper

THE 100th birthday of Oatley Park will go off not with a bang but with a whimper this weekend.

The Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society is the only body which has recognised the centenary of the most significant area of bushland in St George.

In a year of Bicentennial hype, the 100th year since the park was proclaimed will go unnoticed.

When first proclaimed, on May 29, 1888, the land at

Lime Kiln Bay, on the Georges River, was named Peak-hurst Park.

Trustees were appointed to oversee the new 112-acre park, but in 1906 Hurstville Council asked the Department of Lands to put the trusteeship in its hands.

The council asked the trustees to resign, but one of them, a local landowner named Myles McRae, refused.

In a bitter letter to the council, Mr McRae accused the civic fathers of trying to persuade the Government to sell part of the park for subdivision and of doing nothing to make it accessible to the public.

But by the end of the year Mr McRae relented and resigned on the condition the council preserve and improve the park.

On May 20, 1908, the council became trustee of the park.

The name was changed to Oatley Park by proclamation on June 23, 1922.

The council's promised improvements came to fruition during the Great Depression, when unemployed men were given work in road gangs for two weeks at a time.

The existing roadway entrance at the end of Oatley Park Avenue was extended down to the baths, with a return road back around the oval.

At this time a stonemason constructed the kiosk and castellated lookout near the baths. Several other lookouts were built along the river.

During World War II, two units of the Royal Australian Engineers, the 26th Field Company and an engineering unit from Tasmania, were stationed in the park.

The concrete floor of a mess hut and kitchen and a small cement map of Tasmania can still be seen.

The Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society, which provided the information for this article, meets on the fourth Monday of each month at the Uniting Church hall in Frederick Street, Oatley, from 7.45 pm.

Above : The Leader newspaper article, 26 May 1988

In 1988-89, a whole new series of conservation problems arose related to the newly elected Liberal-National State Government's downgrading of environmental priorities. The Crown Lands Act 1989 allowed for the sale of Crown Land to the highest bidder, including areas which had been identified as potential additions to the national estate. Also heavy staff cuts in the National Parks and Wildlife Service was endangering its work and reducing the effectiveness of the organization. On the national scene, the Hawke Labor Government was willing to grant Harris-Daishowa a further 15 years export woodchip licence, putting serious pressure on the N.S.W.'s south-east forests.

All this activity involved a Society committee which was very experienced. John Blacker had provided committed and enthusiastic leadership since 1978, and his unexpected death in January 1987 came as a blow to everyone who knew him. A eulogy to John printed in the February 1987 edition of *OFF News* gave thanks to his work for the Society and expressed members' sadness. The position of President was taken for the next two years by Bernie Sargeant. The rest of the committee was remarkably stable during the decade. For the entire 10 year period, Alan Fairley was a Vice-president (and Newsletter Editor from 1984), Phyllis Bryden was a Vice-president, Harry Whaite was Hon. Treasurer, Ida Carder was Hon Secretary or Assistant Secretary (Ida was granted Hon Life Membership of the Society at the Annual Dinner of 1985), Valmai Douglas was Programme Officer and Val Argall was a committee member. Val Boyan was Field Officer for 8 years and the Society's first female President from 1989-90.

By 1989, a pattern of activity had been set for the Society, a pattern which was reflected in the November AGM report of Keith Underwood, Hon Secretary. Locally, there had been well-attended field days, an array of interesting and informative speakers, monthly flower days, a weekend camp-out and an Annual Dinner. There had been involvements in trying to prevent the destruction of our native trees and the dumping of rubbish in our parks, in cleaning up parts of the Georges River and opposing development plans for Sandy Point and Pleasure Point. Beyond the local area, the Society had co-operated with and supported other environment groups and had urged members to act on a number of national and international green issues. The report also urged the incorporation of the Society so that it could progress into a new decade free of

fear regarding liabilities that might arise from the Society's activities.

The Editorial in *OFF News* for January 1990 reported that “the 1980s has been a decade of mixed success, with a growing environmental awareness among the general public and an increased awareness in political circles of the power of the conservation vote. Against these successes have been many disappointments, but conservationists will continue to fight to ensure that our natural resources are not wasted and that there is a balance between preservation and development.”

CHAPTER 6 1990s:NEW APPROACHES TO LOCAL PROBLEMS

The 1990s was a period in which the Society was clearly focused on the local environment. A range of “big” issues continued to be fought by conservationists Australia-wide, often with the support, both moral and financial, of OFF, but local bush care, native tree preservation and protection of the Georges River increasingly took up more of the Society’s time. The changing nature of Oatley and surrounding suburbs was putting pressure on the environment. The State Government’s policy of urban consolidation led to the construction of more villas and town houses and an influx of new residents displacing the older generation, so that over-development and the removal of large indigenous trees were constantly in the news. At the same time, the Commonwealth and State Governments were providing funding for the care and regeneration of bushland reserves. OFF was heavily involved in applying for these funds and co-operating with local Councils and the National Trust to spend the money on bush care working parties.

Co-operation, partnership and community consultation were the “in” words for the decade. The result was that, like no other period before, the time of OFF committee members was taken up with attending meetings – public inquiries, forums, working parties, inspections, face to face conferences with local and state officials – and the preparation of submissions and associated letters. Council officers at both Hurstville and Kogarah Councils frequently worked with Society personnel in matters concerning the environment. The Society established working links with many other green interest groups which were seeking wider input, a more effective support base and a more substantial public voice for their actions. All these links required meetings, and more meetings.

1990 was designated as Australia’s “Year of Landcare” and was accompanied by a range of projects aimed at greening our country. Soil erosion and land degradation were the major issues addressed but other concerns included sewage and beach pollution, wood-chipping native forests, protection of coastal lands with conservation values, management of Crown land and the problem of ozone depletion. Most of these were beyond OFF’s narrow range of action and resources but our interest was expressed through letters of support or condemnation. Representations were

made in 1991 to Federal and State Governments on issues as diverse as resource security legislation, threatened species legislation, revision of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, proposals to increase accommodation in Kosciuszko National Park and the condition of the walking tracks in Royal National Park. In some cases, monetary donations were made to other larger organizations engaged in fighting for conservation, such as Total Environment Centre, Nature Conservation Council and WIRES. These donations came from a special Presidents Fund, which was regularly topped up mainly through the special efforts of Val Boyan and her Trash and Treasure sales.

There were plenty of local issues for OFF to become involved in. In 1990 there was the proposed rezoning of East Hills Golf Course, problems with State Rail ownership of land beside Neverfail Bay, Hurstville Council's tree lopping and removal program and a draft plan for management of Georges River State Recreation Area. Then the Moore Reserve issue resurfaced. On March 4, 300 local residents attended a protest meeting to get expressions of opinion on Kogarah Council's revised development options of Moore Reserve. A number of OFF members attended and Alan Fairley was one of the speakers. The meeting was clearly against any development option, including playing fields. Subsequently, the Council received 1131 submissions, of which only 4.8% were in favour of active recreation. The Council voted 7 to 4 for passive recreation. However, as if to prove the axiom that conservation victories are never won completely and battles must be continually fought, in April 1993, there was a new push from pro-developers and sporting interests and Kogarah Council appointed a consultant to re-examine the options for the reserve. In early 1998, there was yet another proposal to "improve" the reserve. It included raising the ground level with more fill, tapping off the gas from rotting garbage through a pipe and gas flare, creating a wetland and the addition of active sporting fields. More meetings and a Council forum were held and Kogarah Council seemed to be making an effort to come up with a solution that locals would accept. Eventually, a wetland was constructed which had significant success in creating an environment attractive to both people and wildlife.

The new decade saw a new legal status for OFF. At a Special General Meeting on 28 May 1990, members voted to seek Incorporation under the Associations Incorporation Act. In the opinion of the Committee, incorporation provided relatively

inexpensive protection for all members against the possibility of being personally responsible for debts and liabilities that might arise from the Society's activities. In an era of litigation, such protection was obviously important. It also required a formal set of Society Rules to be submitted to the Corporate Affairs Commission and the appointment of a Public Officer (Tom Chater for most of the decade, followed by Dorothy Rootes). Of course, it also added to the cost of running the Society as the Act required that there should be appropriate liability insurance. Incorporation status was granted, effective from 24 July 1990.

Two important inspection tours took place in 1990. The first was to the south-east forests of NSW. Two OFF members (Graham Quint and Alan Fairley) were part of an 18 person group selected by local MP Guy Yeomans and flown to Merimbula to inspect the wood-chipping facilities and the forest logging sites. It was a trip heavy with forestry propaganda, but the final impressions left on OFF delegates was that the Forestry Commission had become a spokesman for the logging industry and saw the "Forest of the Future" as a regrowth forest, with few large trees and with saplings harvested every 20 years. In June, eight OFF members accompanied Bob Crombie of Friends of Hacking River on an inspection of the upper Hacking River. This was followed by a submission on the Draft Helensburgh Plan, which proposed to rezone bushland areas and build homes for 4000 people, plus 40 hectares of industrial development, in the catchment of the Hacking River. All this would have detrimental effects on the river as it ran through Royal National Park. Members also attended a public meeting in September to discuss this plan. Wollongong Council voted against the Helensburgh Plan on 29 April 1991.

Attendances at meetings were common place in 1990/91, showing the commitment of the Society to a broad range of green issues. There were OFF representatives at a Growing Green Consumer evening, a meeting with the State Environment Minister and local Councillors to discuss problems of the Georges River, the NCC Annual Conference, a community forum to discuss Hurstville's tree removals, the Georges River Forum, a workshop devoted to the question of off-shore sand mining, a committee to canvass the green credentials of local government candidates and an inspection of Malabar Sewage Treatment Works, as well as a number of meetings on local bushland preservation. In 1992, OFF opposed the extension of the waste depot at Lucas Heights and Alan Fairley made a submission on behalf of the Society pointing out the rare

plants in the area. (The plans for the extension were later withdrawn). In the same year, OFF representatives were involved in a meeting on Open Space in Hurstville, the 50th anniversary gathering of ex-soldiers from Oatley Park and a presentation of the Water Board's Clean Waters Program.

Bush care

Local bushland received considerable benefits from the Society's efforts in this ten year period, chiefly through funds obtained for bush regeneration. In December 1990, following an inspection of local parkland and Georges River foreshores, a meeting of interested parties was called by Terry Griffiths, MP for Georges River, to discuss submissions on specific projects which might be funded from the NSW Government's new Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation Trust. The meeting unanimously decided to support a Salt Pan Creek foreshore scheme, with a focus on Riverwood Park, bush regeneration projects in Lime Kiln Bay, Gungah Bay Reserve, Bay Road (Oatley) and Lugarno bush remnants and a one-off grant to extend Hurstville Council's facilities for propagating native tree species. A survey of costs was to be undertaken by the National Trust. The interests of the National Trust and OFF were closely linked as the newly elected President of OFF, Graham Quint, was also a National Trust conservation officer. The Society sponsored a proposal to regenerate the bushland of Yarran Road Reserve, at a cost of \$27,000, and the regeneration of a remnant ironbark woodland at Riverwood Park, also costing \$27,000.

In 1991, the Water Board accepted OFF's submission for funding to repair and regenerate the bushland in Gungah Bay Road, west of Oatley Station. The creek which runs through this reserve was badly in need of attention following the introduction of weeds caused by urban run-off and the Water Board's construction of a sewer line. In November 1991, the Society approached Hurstville Council to ask it to consider naming this bushland the "Myles Dunphy Bushland Reserve" to commemorate the memory and contribution of Myles Dunphy OBE who lived near the reserve from the early 1930s until his death in 1985 and who has been referred to as the "Father of Conservation in NSW". Council accepted this suggestion and referred it to the Geographical Names Board for confirmation. The renaming was approved by November.

The National Trust bush regeneration team, assisted by OFF volunteers, worked throughout 1992 in Myles Dunphy Reserve removing weeds. Regeneration work also began in Riverwood Park, the only clay flora remnant with understorey species remaining in the St George district. In April, under National Trust guidance, Hurstville Council announced a plan for a Natural Heritage Park at Gannons Park, where the original flora of Hurstville could be displayed in gardens grouped for educational purposes. The National Trust drew up the species list and the funding was from a Greenspace Program Grant. OFF was involved through its President Graham Quint. In September, the Society learnt that it had been successful in obtaining a grant of \$28,350 from the Environmental Protection Authority for regeneration of the bushland at the end of Yarran Road, Oatley (along the river, adjacent to the rail bridge).

In the following years, OFF applied for and received a number of other grants for local bushland restoration. These included \$15,000 for the area beside the Oatley-Como Walkway (Environmental Restoration Trust, Sept. 1994), \$20,400 to help restore the estuary and Oatley Bay Creek at Poulton Park (Feb 1997), a Coastcare Grant of \$23,000 for the estuary at Poulton Park (Feb 1998), a further \$29,980 for Poulton Park and \$42,000 for Moore Reserve from the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Fund (Nov 1998). In 1999, OFF worked closely with officers from Kogarah Council and received \$30,000 to help fund a Poulton Park walkway (Coastcare), \$3,450 for work on Oatley Embankment, a valuable flora and fauna corridor below Oatley Public School (Georges River Catchment Management Grant), \$29,890 for work on stream bank erosion, weed eradication, trapping of foxes and weed eradication in Poulton Park (Natural Heritage Trust) and \$30,000 for habitat restoration in Moore Reserve (Natural Heritage Fund). More successful grant applications were obtained in November 1999 - \$108,000 for Stage 2 of Moore Reserve and \$40,990 for Stage 2 of Poulton Park. Kogarah Council enthusiastically supported these grant applications and in most cases contributed additional money as well as the personnel to complete the works. In the case of the Oatley Embankment, students from the Oatley Primary School were involved in the project, which was organised by OFF member Matt Allison.

In total, OFF received and managed \$372,710 from grants for local bushland rehabilitation during the 1990s. The control and distribution of these funds put an increased burden on the Society,

but the Hon Treasurer, John Watters (1993-2002) handled the complex matter with great care and professionalism.

The willingness of the two local Councils to take seriously the management and protection of bushland reserves was a positive and welcome change in attitude from past practices. In August 1994, Kogarah Council allocated \$2,600 for the preparation of a "Caring for Bushland Reserves" leaflet, based on an idea originating with the OFF committee and submitted to Council. The motion was moved in Council by Susan Gainsford, a good friend of OFF. Towards the end of the decade, Council developed a plan for a wetland at Moore Reserve, consisting of a large pond planted with native sedges, to help filter the sediments and pollutants. The majority of the Reserve was to remain grassed for passive recreation.

In 1996, Hurstville Council began to develop a plan to rehabilitate Lime Kiln Wetlands and OFF representatives attended Council planning forums. The project commenced in Oct 1999 and consisted of a series of interlinked sedimentary ponds, two gross pollutant traps and winding channels to slow the flow of the feeder creeks and allow sediment to settle before it reached the reeds and mangroves. Associated with the project was the building of walkways, a foot bridge over Lime Kiln Bay and a circuit walking track around the entire upper reaches of the bay. The total cost of the project was \$1.2 million, of which \$600,000 came from a grant from the Environment Protection Authority. The Society was pleased that this project both protected and improved the environmental values of Lime Kiln Bay, especially after the struggles of the 1970s to stop the bay being destroyed. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this history, one of OFF's members and an engineer, Norm Tonkin, had suggested a ponding system to Council in the 1970s but it had been rejected. It had taken over 20 years for Council to recognise the natural values of Lime Kiln Wetlands, but it was worth waiting for.

Georges River protection

OFF has long been interested in the state of Georges River and was especially critical of sand mining and its effects on the water quality. In the 1990s, new developments up stream caused significant environmental problems and OFF joined in the fight to protect the upper catchment and lessen the negative impacts. At the June 1993 monthly meeting, Sharyn Cullis, a member of OFF as well as of the Georges River Total Catchment Management

Committee, told the Society of the many problems the river faced, including discharges from factories, urban run-off, industrial developments on clay floodplains and new urban developments at Appin and along Cabramatta Creek. Subsequently, in late October, a Georges River Coalition was formed with OFF being represented. In October 1994, 150 people, including conservation representatives from all along the river, attended the launch of the Georges River Environmental Alliance. By 1996, the protection of the river became part of the movement to prevent a second airport at Holsworthy, and involved many more people and many more meetings.

A special Georges River Crisis Seminar was called on May 3 by the Combined Councils of the Georges River area. The meeting at Hurstville Civic Centre was filled with councillors, academics and interested community members. OFF was represented by Sharyn Cullis and Alan Fairley; Sharyn presented a paper on the role of the community. Bernie Clark (Botany Bay conservationist), Chicka Derwent (Oatley oyster farmer) and Bob Wilson (former Water Board Chairman) outlined the sorry state of the river and Ian Kiernan, Chairman of Clean-up Australia, launched a River Keepers Program. In 1996-97, OFF was involved in Sydney Water Special Areas catchment planning.

Many OFF members attended the Holsworthy Action Day protest rally in July 1997. More than 15,000 people were present and trains from Riverwood to Holsworthy on that morning were full of people from Bankstown and St George communities travelling to the rally. As well as OFF members, there were local councillors from both Hurstville and Kogarah, MPs Marie Ficarra and Robert Mc Clelland and supporters from Lugarno Progress Association, Oatley Residents Assoc. and South Peakhurst Progress Association. The proposed airport had stirred up a hornet's nest which could not be ignored and by September 1997, the Federal Government had removed Holsworthy from the options for an international airport.

OFF News continued to report on crisis meetings to deal with the river's problems and identify a number of hot spots and issues of concern (*OFF News*, Sept 1998). In November 1998, Sharyn Cullis drew up a "wish list" for the river, the implementation of which would protect this wonderful natural asset from further degradation. The list of 19 points included "all Crown land on or near foreshores to be dedicated as open space; there should be

continuous, significant and protected corridors of green; reducing the impact of urban run-off and control the overflows from the 351 sewer outlets; a strong Regional Environment Policy to define the roles of all agencies managing the river; and the need to accept that a population of 1.2 million in the Georges River catchment is close to its sustainable limit.” (*OFF News*, Nov 1998).

Over-development and tree preservation

State policies of urban consolidation inevitably led to more villa and town house construction in our suburbs. As a result of a State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP 25, 1987), there also developed a trend for larger houses on existing blocks and subdivision of larger blocks. These developments meant the removal of many substantial native trees from private property. Street trees also came under considerable pressure as Councils felt the need to re-assess the danger of mature trees and the likelihood of them causing personal or property damage, hence leading to litigation. The Society wrote to local estate agents regarding their promotion of subdivisions and was involved in many rear-guard actions, responding in support of frustrated or angry residents who suddenly found a beloved tree about to be axed. OFF members were often able to provide an unbiased opinion on the condition of the tree and to stress its importance to the street-scape. In some cases, this helped save the tree, but more often than not, the decision to remove was carried out. A more positive pro-active course taken by the Society was to try to influence planning policy and have an input into Councils’ tree management procedures.

In March 1991, Hurstville City Council commissioned consultants to undertake an environmental assessment of street tree management in its area. This followed OFF complaints about the Council’s tree removal policy. The leader of the consultancy team, Helen Armstrong, spoke briefly at an OFF meeting to explain the purpose of the survey and to appeal for community involvement. The assessment involved all trees in parks, streets and on foreshore peninsulas. It was hoped that the study would identify how street trees contribute to the Hurstville environment, identify problems and work out ways of dealing with issues such as overhead wires. A follow-up workshop was attended by OFF representatives. However well meaning this assessment was, it failed to solve the problem of tree removal which by 1994 was a major local issue. *OFF News* of February 1994 reported that the chain saws had been active during the Christmas holidays and a number of large beautiful trees in West Oatley had been cut down with Council

approval. The Society urged residents to contact Council immediately on seeing a tree being removed and to lobby the Council for a register of significant trees for their area.

The Society issued invitations to Hurstville Council Aldermen and Officers to attend a general meeting of OFF in August 1994 to explain the Council's tree removal/preservation policies. Ward Aldermen Bill Pickering and Ross Stewart attended, accompanied by Divisional Manager, Engineering, Chris Little. They explained that the application of the Tree Preservation Policy had legal difficulties and appealed for a co-operative rather than a confrontational approach. Alderman Philip Sansom, an OFF member, was a leader at Council level in trying to prevent tree removal (as he was in many other OFF initiatives). A follow-up meeting was held at Council Chambers attended by Society members Graham Quint, Sharyn Cullis, Alan Fairley, Joan Aston, Andrew Stewart and Nicole Hawick. It was agreed that there was a need to educate the community about the value of trees and the preservation of indigenous species. It was revealed that 1,110 applications had been made to remove or lop trees in the previous 6 months. Many of these had been rejected and of those rejected only 17 had been appealed. The main direction of the meeting was towards developing guidelines as to what trees were important as a 200 year old native tree was treated the same as a small recently planted exotic tree. Graham Quint suggested that trees be assessed on a number of set criteria. Council was also asked to re-introduce the supply of free trees (to be local indigenous species) and to notify adjoining neighbours of the pending removal of significant trees. A positive outcome of this meeting was the establishment of a Council-community Tree Preservation Working Party.

The Tree Preservation Working Party met at irregular intervals between 1995 and 1998. It was decided in June 1995 to strengthen the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) of Hurstville, to promote the value of trees to the community in *The Leader* and through posters. Also indigenous native trees grown from seed by Graham Quint were to be supplied to Council for a free give-away once a year. At the March 1997 meeting, the group achieved other positive outcomes regarding the contentious issue of native tree destruction on development sites. For example, it was agreed that:

- ❖ a procedure be put into place to ensure that all Development and Building Application sites are inspected prior to approval and all tree removal requests be referred to the Tree Preservation Officers for assessment;

- ❖ Tree Preservation Order approval be included on Development and Building Application forms;
- ❖ approval forms for Development Applications incorporate an assessment of affected street trees;
- ❖ Hurstville Council's booklet *Building and Renovating in the City of Hurstville* be amended to include more information on the TPO and preservation of indigenous flora, fauna, habitat and landscape.

In September 1997, the Working Party began preparation of a Landscape Code to clarify Development Applications and of brochures (*Living with Trees*) suggesting suitable indigenous trees and shrubs for planting in both sandy and clay soils. OFF members provided information and photographs for these brochures. By early 1998, Council had decided to print a message on the importance of trees on its envelopes and investigate the possibility of a garden competition. Council also developed a planting program in targeted streets. Cards were dropped into houses telling residents of future plantings and inviting them to choose a suitable small tree from a list which included banksia, angophora, lillypilly and blueberry ash.

By 1995, local Councils were receiving a flood of ratepayers' complaints about the results of urban consolidation and dual-occupancy. This policy was having social and environmental consequences and undermining the quality of life in communities as infrastructure failed to cope. Under the banner of urban consolidation, more and bigger houses were being squeezed onto blocks destroying the native tree cover that gives the area its character, increasing traffic and overloading the sewers and stormwater systems that were not designed for the extra loads. The *OFF News* (May 1995) lists a number of complaints by local residents about over-development.

One large development planned for 47-67 Mulga Road, Oatley West, highlighted the problems. A number of development proposals for the site had been applied for and rejected by Council. These included ideas for two tower blocks, a row of shops and 3 storey villa development. But in August 1995, a new proposal emerged for a double row of town houses, units to 3 storeys high and a supermarket to be leased by Coles. OFF, together with other community groups, protested to Hurstville Council regarding this proposal which was clearly out of character with the area, would cause traffic problems, adversely

affect local retailers and degrade the village atmosphere of Oatley. A meeting called for August 29 to oppose this development attracted over 800 people; they voted unanimously against the development. Despite changes in the original plan, residents continued their fight against the development and it was not until late 2004 that Hurstville Council finally rejected the Development Application. The matter was then taken to appeal in the Land and Environment Court which approved the development. Hurstville Council continued its opposition, calling the decision “an outrage”. Local residents in August 2005 circulated petitions called for a boycott of the Coles Supermarket planned for the development and demonstrated at the site. Hurstville Council appealed the decision, but on 1 November 2005 the Land and Environment Court dismissed this appeal. Hurstville Mayor, Cr Badalati expressed the general frustration with the decision by saying that “*we are getting a reoccurring theme from the Land and Environment Court that they are not listening to the community.*” (Leader, 3 Nov 2005).

By the end of the decade, over-development in our low density bushland suburbs remained a problem. OFF raised several objections with local Councils regarding the unsuitability of building proposals and supported Hurstville Council’s attempts to have its Development Control Plan amended so as to limit building height in the 3(a) Business Zones in Peakhurst Ward. It also called on Council to re-instate its Foreshore Protection policies. In 1999, Hurstville’s Foreshore Scenic Protection Plan was approved by the State Government. Also in 1999, the attempt by local residents to have a two-storey limit in small shopping centres in Peakhurst Ward was refused by the State Government until Council agreed to build more home units throughout Hurstville. Following further representations, the two-storey limit was approved in 2000. In 2002 all small shopping areas were rezoned for neighbourhood shops. Unfortunately, two errors were made by Council – the “neighbourhood zone” was incorrectly titled “general business” and the two-storey height restriction was inadvertently removed from the controls. These mistakes allowed the approval of the Mulga Road development by the Land and Environment Court.

Other Society activities

Society activities throughout the 1990s followed the by now well established arrangements of monthly members’ meetings, field days, one or two weeks in summer to Smiggin Holes, a

Christmas barbecue and get-together in Oatley Park (from 1998), Annual Dinner and an annual camping weekend. Camps included those held at Newnes Plateau (twice), Jervis Bay, Bundanoon, Green Patch, Mittagong, Wombeyan Caves, Bouddi and Katoomba Falls. Attendance was usually about 30 people. 85 to 100 attended monthly meetings and Saturday walks were also well attended. Occasionally there would be additional activities, like two bus trips to Lithgow led by John Watters (the Oct 1997 trip attracting 50 people), an inspection of the Illawarra Grevillea Park (1998), a week in June at Barrington Guest House (June 1999) and three bus trips inland to Innamincka (1997, 8 days; 1998, 2 weeks; 1999, 11 days)

Each year there was participation in both the Oatley and Lugarno Lions Festivals, in the national Clean-up Australia campaign and providing a judge for the Native Gardens competition. After 15 years, Nancy Beattie led her last plant identification walk in Oatley Park (Nov 1992), but this was replaced by monthly weekday rambles in local bushland areas conducted by Jenny Quint. Coastcare walks were led in local bushland by Ralph Newbould and Alan Fairley and in 1997 Ralph led two walks in Oatley Park attended by large groups of Chinese people and called the Australian Environment Orientation Walks. Public relations and Society promotion involved talks to groups like Oatley Heritage Group, displays at Penshurst Library, an exhibition at the School Children's Expo at St George TAFE and representations at numerous local and State forums.

The Society continued the practice of making representations and submissions on Federal and State environmental issues. A list of the issues concerning the Society is a good sample of what was concerning the environmental movement as a whole during this decade. In 1992 these included : Threatened Species legislation, waste minimisation, south-east forests, Kosciusko management, rural land clearing and enlargement of the Lucas Heights waste depot. Later there was deer removal and illegal shellfish collecting in Royal National Park, wilderness legislation, Sydney's second airport, the Snowy River flow, protection of Dharawal, Helensburgh urban development, degrading of koala habitats, coal mining waste on Illawarra Escarpment, horses in national parks, the building of Fitzroy Dam, cats on Macquarie Island, the Forestry and National Parks Estate Bill (1998), coral bleaching on Great Barrier Reef, Cooks

River management, and much more. OFF added its voice to the widespread and international protests regarding French nuclear testing in the Pacific.

Following complaints from local residents, the Society responded to concerns over the lack of control over feral animals. Cats and European wasps received some attention but it was foxes which became the main focus. To illustrate the extent of the problem, OFF (under the leadership of Lesley Winters) conducted a survey of fox sightings between Kogarah and Lugarno over the period February to May 1998. This proved the widespread nature of the fox problem, with sightings and dens recorded for almost every area of local bush. The results were transposed onto a map and sent to Kogarah and Hurstville Councils with questions as to what they would do to reduce the fox numbers. A campaign to make people aware of the fox problem was launched in *OFF News* (Mar, April, Sept 1998), letters were sent to Aldermen and State politicians and the issue was highlighted at gatherings like the Lions Festivals. The supply of traps to residents and den gassing became more common, but foxes still remain a threat to local wildlife.

Another local problem taken up by the Society was hazard reduction burning in Oatley Park. A burn was carried out in April 1997 by the Fire Brigade which received much local criticism. No overall burn plan existed at the time, and no adequate studies had been done on ideal times between burns nor follow up work to assess rehabilitation after burns. Subsequently, the Society was able to negotiate with Council and the Fire Brigade Service to develop a Fire Management Plan for Oatley Park to ensure the survival of its diversity and rare plant species.

In 1995, the roll out of wires for mobile phones had become a major issue all over Sydney. The Society was one of the first groups to express concern over the environmental impacts of the new over-head wiring (especially by Optus). OFF made two submissions to AUSTEL and members attended public meetings seeking a review of the National Telecommunications Code which gave the new telecommunications companies unprecedented power allowing them to over-ride local planning laws and ruin attractive streetscapes. This was just the beginning of the problem which came to head when Hutchison

tried to build a communications tower in Oatley Park in 2002-03.

There was a nice balance between continuity and new blood on the OFF Committee during the decade. There were two new Presidents - Graham Quint (1991-4), bringing with him his experience of conservation work on the National Trust, and John Winters (1996-2000), bringing his background in business. Keith Underwood was Hon Secretary from 1988 to 1993; he was followed by Robin Dickson (1994-2004). Harry Whaite continued as Hon Treasurer until 1992, to be followed by John Watters (1993-2002). Alan Fairley was Vice-president and newsletter editor for the 10 years. Val Douglas, who had been Programme Officer since 1980 continued in this role until 2001. Val Boyan looked after the Presidents Fund from 1991 to 2002. Other long-serving officers were Beverley Watters (Publicity, 1990-98), Val Argall (Field Officer, 1989-94) and John Blake (Field Officer, 1995-99).

Membership at the end of 1991 was recorded as 321 adults, although it was difficult to be exact as memberships were as Households, not as Individuals. The rate of increase in memberships fell in the mid 1990s. Between 1985 and 1991, the average rate of increase was 6% per annum; between 1991 and 1994, this had fallen to 2% increase. In 1995, membership fell by 4%. This was mostly because of the changing demographics of the district, with people ageing or moving away from the area. A number of long-term active members died during this period, including the sad loss of Ida Carder, Rita Sainty, Milo Dunphy, Mavis Kennelly, Gordon Wormald, Ray Jamieson, Bill Hall, Val Argall and Beatrice Goldstein. Mrs Goldstein (committee member from 1960 to 1970) left \$1000 in her will to the Society, funds which were used for the re-printing of the *Native Plants of Oatley Park* (2000) booklet.

A pleasing trend developing by the end of the decade was the positive relationships between the Society and Hurstville and Kogarah Councils. There was a willingness to jointly solve the problems of tree preservation, joint applications for grant moneys for bushland regeneration, and community consultation on Riverwood Wetlands, Lime Kiln Bay and Moore Reserve. The Councils and their officers showed a new willingness to respond positively to environmental matters. Kogarah Council had organised a Wetlands Awareness Week (1997) and had

invested time and money on bush care. Hurstville Council had hosted workshops such as the one for Salt Pan Creek Stormwater Management (1999) and worked with residents' groups to prevent over-development of the area. Early indications of this change in attitude could be seen in 1993 when Kogarah Council produced a report on the impact of cats on native wildlife and resolved to embark on a "cat education program". It also resolved that "*Council include a worm factory as part of its waste minimisation program...and promote and sell the worm factory to the residents of the Municipality in conjunction with composting campaigns with the objective of reducing the overall amount of waste going to landfill.*" In the same year, Hurstville Council adopted the policy "*to use only timber guaranteed not to originate from rainforest or old growth forest sources.*" Perhaps they were trying too hard to assert their green credentials, but the change in attitude was welcome and in stark contrast to the anti-environmental and confrontational situations of 20 years before.

1999 saw both State and Local Government elections. OFF, hoping to encourage politicians with positive attitudes towards the environment, developed a series of questions which were sent to candidates standing in local State electorates (March 1999). These focused both on local issues (urban consolidation, Georges River protection, urban foxes) and wider State issues (Snowy River, old growth forests, rural land clearing, national park protection). Over-development emerged as a major issue in the elections and St George and Sutherland Councils all got a mention in the media as development-orientated bodies responsible for inappropriate housing approvals. Local Council elections were held in September and OFF had no hesitation in recommending for election those candidates who had a proven record of support for the environment. These people were named in *OFF News* in August. An editorial in the October newsletter expressed the view that the Council elections were a victory for the community and that all candidates recommended in August had been successful. There was an air of anticipation as the Society looked forward to a new era of co-operation and green policies at both State and local levels.

CHAPTER 7 2000-2005: INTO THE FUTURE

The first two years of the new millennium proved to be reasonably quiet for the Society. Hurstville Council's work was progressing in Lime Kiln Bay, with a series of holding ponds, plantings of native sedges and shrubs and two gross pollution traps. This newly developed wetland was officially opened on 8 Sept. 2001. Plans for a track and boardwalk to encircle the Bay, connected by a foot bridge, were also under way and comment on the plans was made by OFF members. Kogarah Council was constructing the wetland in Moore Reserve (water was first added to the pond in Sept. 2001) and the Mangrove Walkway in Poulton Park was officially opened on 28 Sept. 2001. OFF was represented at this opening as our grants money was instrumental in the boardwalk being built. In Nov 2002, the Society was also represented at the re-opening of Oatley Pleasure Grounds after an upgrade of the creek gully and bush regeneration; much of this work had been carried out by OFF members under contract to Council.

In the absence of major issues, OFF members were able to fully enjoy the outdoor activities, which include trips to Smiggin Holes each February, Barrington Guest House (2000 and 2001), Lithgow by train (Oct 2000) and the annual camping weekend at Newnes in the Wolgan Valley (Nov 2000). Well attended monthly walks went to such varied destinations as Hunters Hill, Hermitage Foreshore, Centennial Park for bird study, Avalon coastline, Spit-Manly, Grand Canyon at Blackheath, Ku-ring-gai Chase and Barren Grounds Nature Reserve. Additional mid-week walks were led by Keith Robinson to Petersham (2002) and Muogamarra Nature Reserve (2003). Attendances at monthly meetings were also very good, with one talk on attracting birds to gardens (in Mar 2001) drawing 120 people. Following requests from Tasmania in 2001, a number of members knitted "penguin jumpers" and sent them to the Tasmanian Conservation Trust to assist in the survival of oil slicked penguins. Donations were also made towards the construction of a Bruny Island (Tas.) fence to prevent penguins being killed on the road.

The Society promoted itself (and indirectly environmental issues) in a number of ways. It had stalls at Oatley and Lugarno Lions Festivals, a public awareness street stall in May 2001, a "Bring a Friend" to a meeting (March) and attendance at Hurstville's National Tree Day at Heritage Park, Lugarno. John Watters and

Robin Dickson represented the Society at a “Vision for the Future” conference sponsored by Hurstville Council. At the official opening of Moore Reserve Wetland (5 April 2002), OFF had an information stall and led walks around the reserve identifying native plants. A new colour brochure and membership application form was produced in 2003. OFF printed two brochures by a local naturalist, David Waterhouse, entitled *Observing Birds in Oatley* (2001) and *Observing Birds Nesting in Oatley* (2002), giving copies to local libraries. As a joint venture with Georges River Community Service, a children’s art competition was held to celebrate World Environment Day 2004, with an OFF member being one of the judges. A Society website was developed in 2002-03 with the help of students from Padstow TAFE and input from John Winters. Numerous student enquiries were dealt with from high school, horticultural and environmental science students. The technological advances of email and website played a large part in responding to these enquiries.

www.off.oatleypark.com is maintained and updated by OFF committee member Melina Amerasinghe and husband Michael Korber.

To promote environmental awareness and to raise the profile of the Society among young people, OFF initiated a book prize for environmental excellence at three local primary schools - Oatley, Oatley West and St Josephs - and committee members attended each school’s Presentation Ceremony to present the awards. In 2003, the Society applied for and received a grant of \$3,000 from Kogarah Council for “enhancement of local school students’ practical skills and appreciation of environmental habitat through collaborative landscaping and gardening”. In practice, this led to a series of talks to primary students at Oatley Primary and St Joseph’s Primary Schools, employing experts on such topics as birds and plants, Aboriginal food and growing native plants, combined with outdoor experiences in local reserves. OFF’s increased contact with local schools led to the Society being invited to help with the development of Oatley Public School’s Environmental Policy and Oatley West Public School sought advice on suitable tree species to plant.

The Society continued to take an interest in a large number of green issues. In mid 2000, the Hon. Secretary, Robin Dickson, sent letters to Commonwealth parliamentarians expressing concern over proposals in Federal Parliament for legislation regarding

Genetically Modified Foods (GM). They were urged to continue with the consultative process and to embark on extensive public consultation. Detailed labelling of all GM products was seen as essential to give consumers a real choice. The letters also expressed concern “*at the possible environmental effects that may ensue from the growing of GM crops. In the past, agricultural and/or biological methods have been introduced in what was thought at the time to be best practice, however often with unforeseen problems.*” In mid 2001, Jim Douglas attended a public meeting on GM foods at NSW Parliament House and his report to OFF called for action in the form of writing to retail food chains and keeping politicians informed. Society interest in this issue continued in subsequent years (see *OFF News* April 2003).

Actions on other environmental issues included letters or submissions on (in 2002) sale of Defence Department land at Mill Creek, vehicles on beaches, water conservation, the decline of sharks, container deposits, 4WDs on beaches, brumby culling methods, environment and population, mountain bikes in Royal National Park, (in 2003) western woodlands, sustainable population for Sydney, opposition to mobile phone towers in national parks and to a proposed sailing club at Vincentia, funding for Coastal Community Network and (in 2004) Kurnell and Kosciuszko N.P. management, Threatened Species legislation changes and feral deer in Royal N.P. OFF committee members attended many meetings, including NCC Skills Workshop (Margaret Schonell), Environmental Trusts Grants Workshop (Fred Bell), NCC Annual Conference (Fred Bell) and a committee on feral deer (Alan Fairley). A submission registering the Society’s interest in the “Sydney Metropolitan Strategy” was made in 2004 and Jan Douglas and David Crawford attended the Sydney Environment Forum and an Environmental Defenders Office workshop. Letters were sent to Oatley businesses asking them to outline their policies on plastic bag reduction.

Some changes took place on the OFF Committee between 2000 and 2005, but all its members maintained a strong commitment to the environment, a willingness to put in hours of voluntary work and a mixture of experience and enthusiasm. John Winters stepped down as President in Feb 2001 and was replaced by Cliff Crane (2001-03) and Jan Douglas (2004-05). Alan Fairley remained Vice-president but gave up the Editor’s position (after 20 years) to Fred Bell (2004-05). John Winters, Fred Bell and Julian Sheen were all Vice-presidents. Robin Dickson, who had been Hon

Secretary since 1994, stood down in Feb 2005. Faye Coughlan was elected the new Hon Secretary. John Watters was Hon Treasurer in 2000-02, followed by Carolyn Cotter (2003-05). Other committee members were : Graham and Janet Austin (Field Officers); Lesley Cox and Melina Amerasinghe (Programme Officers); Jan Douglas and Margaret Schonell (Publicity); Matt Allison, Sharyn Cullis, Faye Coughlan, John Winters, John Watters and David Koffel were all Additional Officers. Three long-serving and hard-working members withdrew from the committee during this time – Val Boyan, who had served the Society in many positions since 1970, retired at the end of 2002 (a total of 33 years) and Val Douglas, who had looked after the Society's speaker programme from 1980 to 2000, retired at the end of 2001. Also 2001 was the first time in 29 years that Harry Whaite was not one of the committee members, and the committee regretted losing his extensive background knowledge.

A number of these committee members received well-deserved community recognition at local awards ceremonies in these years. The Georges River Community Award was presented to Robin Dickson (2001), John Watters (2002), Val Douglas (2003) and Fred Bell (2004). Hurstville Council's Volunteers Award went to Alan Fairley (2001), Val Boyan (2002), Melina Amerasinghe (2003) and Lesley Cox (2004).

Some local environmental problems lingered and will probably never go away entirely. Requiring attention were the continuing problems of foxes in local reserves, management of bushland reserves, tree removal and inappropriate building development. There was more consultation with Hurstville Council regarding trapping and den removal of foxes. Committee members attended Kogarah Council's meetings on Poulton Park Plan of Management as it seemed to allow further buildings in the park. A further Coastcare grant of \$22,000 was obtained, this time for Shipwrights Bay, a narrow reserve running along the bay at Blakehurst west of Tom Ugly's Bridge. Submissions were made on Kogarah's Greenways Plan and opposition to the re-zoning of the former Diggers Bowling Club which would impact on bushland. OFF had an input into H.C.C.'s Plan of Management for Heinrich Reserve, Lugarno, through Jan Douglas. During 2002, OFF asked Councils for a commitment to recurrent maintenance funding for bushcare, opposed loss of open space with the expansion of the Hurstville Aquatic Centre and bush destruction on the perimeter of Hurstville Golf Club. An attempt by Hurstville Council in early 2005 to slash

its Bushcare funding was strongly opposed by OFF and other members of the community. There were public meetings on the issue, letters to Councillors, an OFF submission to Council and letters to *The Leader*. These protests led to a re-think by Council and restoration of the funding in the Council budget. The Society continued to support the volunteer Bushcare groups organised by both Councils.

Mature trees were still disappearing in alarming numbers because of building construction and excessive concerns about safety. The Society requested that Hurstville Council's Tree Management Working Party be re-convened. It had lapsed in 1998, restored in June 2001, lapsed again and restored 2005. It was clear at the first meeting in 2001 that State Government urban consolidation policies were leading to over-development and tree loss and that any refusal to remove trees by Council would more than likely lead to a challenge in the Land and Environment Court. The meeting discussed the need for new procedures to identify and protect trees on development sites, the possibility of a bond per tree, the need for a tree survey of the Foreshore Scenic Protection Area and Council's willingness to prosecute offenders where there was evidence of illegal tree removal. Tree loss continued to be an issue in 2003 and 2004, and Oatley lost trees in Llewellyn St, Wyong St, Waratah St, Baker St, Ada St, Mulga Rd and Moore Reserve (and probably many others the Society was not aware of). In many cases the Councils accepted an arborist's opinion about the danger from "fungal activity", seeing Australian trees through European eyes and being unaware that fungal activity is a natural growth process in native trees, helping to form hollows which have great habitat value for birds and other fauna.

In Aug 2001, the Society opposed Kogarah Council's Draft Tree Preservation Policy, which if implemented, could have spelled destruction for any tree in the Municipality. Criteria for tree removal in this policy included :

"The tree has blocked or is likely to block views and removal will allow access to lost views or allow retention of views."

"The tree, in the opinion of the Councillor Tree Committee, is out of character with the area by virtue of its species, location, maintenance requirements, size and existing number of trees".

The first opened up a huge opportunity for residents to get rid of trees all along the Georges River and the second allowed almost any tree to be removed for any reason. Two OFF members, Mamie Clark and Sharyn Cullis, attended an acrimonious Council meeting

in July 2001 and OFF made submissions to Council and State Government against the proposal. This policy was eventually withdrawn as it would have involved a change in the Local Environment Plan, which the State Government rejected. Kogarah Council was working on a new Tree Policy in early 2005 and the Society will be given an opportunity to comment on it prior to its adoption by Council.

Over-development remained an on-going problem and the single most important issue affecting the area at this time as it involved loss of green space, tree preservation, traffic issues, storm water run-off and stream pollution. In March 2001, some of the long thin blocks of land in Llewellyn Street, West Oatley, with their grand Blackbutt trees and spreading Angophoras framing water views, were subject to dual-occupancy and sub-division applications. Despite many objections from local residents and serious concern over the legality of the proposal, Hurstville Council approved the application, thus showing up weakness in the Foreshore Scenic Protection amendment to the Hurstville LEP. The March/April and May/June 2001 issues of *OFF News* were reporting more problems under the heading of "Urban Consolidation" as town houses were being planned for River Road, West Oatley, with significant threats to large indigenous trees in the surrounds. Kogarah Council also at this time developed a plan for future urban consolidation which meant more loss of green space. "Urban Consolidation" had become just a euphemism for fitting as many villas and town houses as possible onto suburban blocks and sub-dividing large blocks into smaller units.

Plans for extensions of the port facilities at Botany Bay began to become known by mid 2002 and occupied much time and effort of OFF over the following years. Committee members Graham Austin, Dr Fred Bell and John Watters were especially involved. At first, Graham represented the Society at meetings of the Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance and Fred was on the scientific committee of the Botany Bay Studies Unit. The Society made initial submissions on a paper entitled "The Tide is Turning". The proposed extension of the port would mean a massive increase in heavy trucks, degradation of the Bay and the virtual destruction of the Penrhyn Inlet bird sanctuary. OFF committee's view was that port expansion should take place in Newcastle and Wollongong, not Sydney. OFF members were among the 65 representatives at the Botany Bay Forum on 6 Sept 2003. In Feb 2004, the EIS was put on display, and in Oct 2004 Graham Austin and Fred Bell

presented OFF's submission to the Port Botany Commission of Inquiry. John Watters also addressed the Commission.

Oatley Park was thrust into the headlines in 2003. In the Christmas holiday period of 2002-03, Hutchison Telecom (Orange Mobile) proposed to erect a telecommunication tower and power shed in Oatley Park on the edge of the oval. The construction was vigorously opposed by parents from the nearby public school and community members formed under the title of Oatley Park Defenders Group. A number of these opponents were OFF members and Cliff Crane spoke on behalf of the Society at a rally on 15 Jan. The construction was delayed for a month, but early in the morning of 10 Feb, equipment to erect the antenna tower was moved into the park. Parents and children soon arrived and protested around the site. Hurstville Council, which supported the protest, got an agreement to temporarily stop the work. The following month saw the NSW Environment Court rule in favour of Hutchison and the antenna began to be erected. Again a group of dedicated people arrived to stop the work both by peaceful demonstration and by chaining themselves to the work place. Some had to be carried from the site – achieving maximum publicity not only for local newspapers, but also for national television.

Despite the antenna being constructed, opposition continued. OFF's argument was based on the inadequacy of the Flora Assessment used by Hutchison which had not identified any significant flora for the park. The Society also objected to the fact that a private company could construct a facility in a public reserve against community wishes and use public land for commercial purposes. It was feared that this was just the beginning of many such towers. Hurstville Council took Hutchison to the NSW Supreme Court of Appeal in May 2003 which found that the tower had been erected illegally and ordered the company to remove it within 10 days. Hutchison lost its subsequent appeal in the High Court of Australia and the offending tower and associated shed were removed from Oatley Park on 4 October. To see the tower physically gone was a wonderful outcome for the many people who fought against the commercial exploitation and desecration of Oatley Park, especially for OFF which has a 50 year record of fighting for the park.

The Hutchison tower issue had shown clearly that Oatley Park was in need of greater legal protection so the Society took steps to draw

up a nomination for the park to be listed on the NSW Heritage Inventory, a detailed and time consuming process which was completed and sent to the Heritage Office in January 2004. At the same time, Hurstville Council was preparing its Draft Plan of Management for Oatley Park. In March 2003, the Society submitted its comments on the park management to Council, placing strong emphasis on the preservation of natural bushland, appropriate fire procedures, elimination of feral animals and maintenance of low-key recreational facilities. Again, in January 2004, the Society's views were presented directly to a consultant working on the Management Plan. The Draft Plan went on display for comments in August 2004 and was adopted by Council in November 2004. In general, the Society regarded the plan as a balanced and reasonable document which would protect the park for the future.

One new problem which it was hoped that the plan would help overcome was that of mountain bikes using dirt tracks in Oatley Park, causing erosion and damage to native vegetation. *The Leader* had highlighted our concerns in May 2003 and the damage had been inspected by Mayor Vince Badalati with OFF members David Koffel and Alan Fairley in August. The Mayor immediately directed Council staff to see what remedial action could be done to arrest the "unacceptable damage", suggested the placing of wooden telegraph poles to act as natural barriers and said that "organised mountain bike riding in areas other than established tracks will not be tolerated". Robin Dickson met with Council officers later that month. They seemed genuinely concerned about the damage and recognised that it would get worse if no action was taken. The Plan of Management (as adopted Nov 2004) restricted all cycling to formed roads or fire trails and removed them from bush tracks.

The Society's defence of Oatley Park and concerns over its management seem very appropriate as the Society reaches its 50th anniversary, as it was the threat to Oatley Park which resulted in the formation of OFF back in 1955. After a long journey, the Society has returned to its roots.

PROPOSALS AND THREATS TO OATLEY PARK, 1955-2005

Opposed by Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society
as they would damage the park's natural values

1955	General bush vandalism; the reason for the Society being formed.
1956	Application for a Rifle Range in bush between Lime Kiln Bay and Waterfall Road. Clearing began but abandoned after protests.
1961	Olympic-sized pool for Sandy Bay, with concreted bottom and walls. Rejected by Council.
1964	Mangroves of Lime Kiln Bay to be filled in for a sporting complex and an extended golf course. Did not proceed at this stage.
1964	Proposal to extend road through Oatley Park, over Lime Kiln Bay to Peakhurst. Dumping of rocks for causeway begun.
1964	Plans for an Olympic Pool between the oval and the playground. Three acres of trees to be cleared. Provision of car park and widening of existing access roads. Opposed by Lands Department.
1966	Application for fireworks in Oatley Park.
1966	Proposal by Hurstville Council for a second oval in Oatley Park.
1967	Plans for a sporting complex in the mangrove area of Lime Kiln Bay still being considered.
1968	Application for permissive occupancy for a marina off Jewfish Bay. Cars to be parked in Oatley Park.
1968	Application for a private telephone to be installed in Oatley Park so that boat hirers could park and then telephone the above marina.
1969	Council policy of frequent burning off of park bushland.
1970	Proposals to run high tension power lines through park.
1971	Council application to tip household rubbish in Jewfish Bay.
1972	Council filling in of north arm of Lime Kiln Bay. It became Roberts Ave Garbage Tip.
1973-74	Council proposes to fill eastern arm of Lime Kiln Bay.
1975	Application for a Commonwealth grant to build a swimming pool in park.
1977	A water activities centre, with boat sheds, proposed by Scouts Association for Sandy Bay. Proposal eventually failed after 3 years.
1978	Application for a helicopter pad on Oatley Park oval. Refused by Council.
1985	Excessive hazard reduction burning by Fire Brigade. Opposition led eventually to a park fire policy.
2003	Hutchison Telecom communications tower and facilities constructed on edge of park oval. Removed after court action by Hurstville Council. OFF action part of community protest.
2003-04	Mountain bikes causing significant damage to park. Council Management Plan excludes mountain bikes at request of OFF.

SOME ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SOCIETY

- 50 years of opposing numerous proposals for Oatley Park which would have damaged the park's natural values. (Mostly successful, see Box).
- Obtaining nearly \$400,000 to rehabilitate local bushland reserves at Yarran Road, Neverfail Bay, Riverwood Park, Poulton Park, Moore Reserve, Myles Dunphy Reserve, Shipwrights Bay and Oatley Pleasure Ground.
- Publication of educational materials promoting an appreciation of the natural history of the area, including Oatley Park booklet, Oatley Park Plant List, Birds of Oatley, study of birds of Moore Reserve Wetlands and school study sheets.
- Assist Councils in preparing leaflets on "Living with Trees" (suitable trees for planting in Hurstville Municipality) and "Caring for Bushland Reserves" in Kogarah Municipality.
- Educating about green issues and developing a conservation ethic in the local community through monthly newsletter (since 1968), expert speakers at monthly meetings, informative leaflets and stalls at such activities as Lions Festivals.
- Providing a vehicle for involvement of local people who are interested in environmental matters and wish to act on those beliefs.
- Providing a focus for people who wish to meet and walk in a stimulating and friendly atmosphere and at the same time to enjoy outdoor activities and learn about the environment.
- Acting as a voice for the local community concerned about such local Council policies as urban consolidation, tree removal, feral animal control, Georges River management and bushland protection.

- Providing a way for members to express their environmental concerns on state and national issues through letters, face-to-face meetings and forums.
- Direct input into Councils' policies through written submissions, meetings and committee participation in matters such as management plans for local reserves (e.g., Oatley Park, Heinrich Reserve), bush fire control plans, changes in Local Environment Plans and mountain bikes using bush tracks in Oatley Park.
- Negotiated with Hurstville Council and Fire Brigade to develop a Fire Management Plan for Oatley Park.
- Working on Hurstville City Council's Tree Preservation Working Party to develop environmentally friendly policies.
- Financial and moral support of other conservation organizations. Over \$3000 donated to other environmental groups in the 5 years 2000-2004.
- Part of successful campaigns in opposition such proposals as Helensburgh urban development, mega-tip at Lucas Heights, sell off of Commonwealth land at Mill Creek on Georges River, sailing club at Vincentia, airport at Holsworthy, and many more.
- Contributing to successful local campaigns to prevent rubbish dumping in Jewfish Bay, Gungah Bay, Poulton Park mangroves and east arm of Lime Kiln Bay and to keep Moore Reserve for passive recreation.
- Alliance with other community groups in successful campaign to prevent the construction of Hutchison telecommunication tower in Oatley Park.

OFF EXECUTIVE

President

1955	Rafael (Rafe) Kowron (Acting)
1956	Harold Barr
1957	Keith Williams
1958	Jack Andresen
1959-1962	Cec Sainty
1963-1965	Eric Wheeler
1966-1967	A.E. (Bert) Hayes
1968-1969	Ted Allsopp
1970-1972	Phil Hall
1973-1974	Paddy McKenzie
1975-1977	Alan Fairley
1978-1986	John Blacker
1987-1988	Bernie Sargeant
1989-1990	Val Boyan
1991-1994	Graham Quint
1995	Alan Fairley (Acting)
1996-2000	John Winters
2001-2003	Cliff Crane
2004-2006	Jan Douglas

Hon Secretary

1956	Moyia Kowron
1957-1958	Rafe Kowron
1959-1967	Doris Newbould
1968-1969	Beatrice Goldstein
1970-1971	Alice Lloyd
1972-1982	Ida Carder
1983-1984	June Underwood
1985-1987	Lesley Cox
1988-1993	Keith Underwood
1994-2004	Robin Dickson
2005-2006	Faye Coughlan

Hon Treasurer

1956-1958	Rafe Kowron
1959-1967	Edwin Dalziel
1968-1971	Arnold Bryden
1972-1992	Harry Whaite
1993-2002	John Watters
2003-2005	Carolyn Cotter
2006	Lesley Wylie

In 2005, environmental problems still remain in the St George area. But one thing is clear – if there had not been an OFF, then the local environment would have been less green and a less desirable place in which to live.

“Congratulations to all those folk who have been in the past 50 years, and are currently, responsible for the life of this terrific Society of ours. OFF found me early in 1986, after the death of my dear husband, Philip. My family and I realised the necessity for me to find new interests in my life, and my daughter noticed a paragraph in *The Leader* newspaper inviting anyone interested to join a group of OFF people on a short morning walk once a month in Oatley Park, when the keenest of them kept a record of the blossoming of the native plants. My joining them led me to becoming an OFF member. I soon realised that the friends, activities and terrific speakers on topics that interested me was just what I needed in my new life...a constant blessing. Thank you, OFF, one and all.”

Mamie Clark February 2005

Assistant Field Officer 1990-92; Current Hospitality Officer