

EAST HILLS GROUP NEWSLETTER



AUGUST 2016

NEXT EHG MEETING:

From 7 pm for 7.30 pm start, Wednesday 3 August 2016

*2015 re-enactment of the 1915 Coo-ee recruitment march from
Gilgandra to Sydney – and the vegetation along the way*

Speaker: Sue Foster

LUGARNO-PEAKHURST UNITING CHURCH

909 Forest Road Lugarno (opposite the Chivers Hill Lugarno shops)

Visitors are welcome.

If you can, please bring something to share for supper, and labelled specimens for the plant table.

WELCOME to the August edition of the East Hills Group Newsletter. Did you miss the July meeting? This newsletter includes lots of information from Dorothy Luther's talk on urban bushland, so dive in! Enjoy your garden! and I hope to see you at the August meeting.

Jan Douglas, Editor

In this newsletter:

- A note from the President
- Plant notes from the July plant table
- Coming events—Reminders, dates to note
- 'Holding back the concrete'
- Notes from our July meeting
- EHG contact details.

www.easthills.austplants.com.au



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our own Dorothy Luther presented the talk at our July meeting. Attendance was again disappointing, however those absent missed a very stimulating and interesting presentation. It was at times a little discouraging perhaps, but overall encouraging in that a proportion of local residents showed by their actions, their care for and interest in a natural environment and an abhorrence for the desecration that has been perpetrated in certain areas.

Our minutes secretary Liz Cameron has produced a very detailed description of Dorothy's talk and this will be tabled at the August meeting and is well worth reading. [It's also included in this newsletter – Editor.] Thanks Liz.

At our August meeting we will have the talk on the Cooee March re-enactment and I encourage as many members and visitors as possible to attend. Likewise for our November meeting when Shauna Chadlowe from Australian Wildlife Conservancy will give a presentation.

Menai's meeting on Saturday 9 July was a lesson in Australian history with descriptions of mills constructed in the Georges River area. Several questions were asked of the presenter and much interest was shown. This demonstrates that it is not always necessary to have a talk incorporating flora species. A variety of subjects can be of interest.

Our visit to Sylvan Grove is coming up and support will be needed in organising this. Other groups will be invited as usual.

The APS NSW Annual Get-together, hosted by Tamworth Group, is rapidly approaching, and also the Gathering in November hosted by Macarthur Group.

Graham Walters
President



**Don't forget the
Annual Get-together in Tamworth
20-21 August 2016**

with extra activities: talks, field trips, garden visits, tag-along tour

YOU NEED TO REGISTER BY 5 AUGUST

For a copy of the program and the registration form see the April issue of your journal *Native Plants for New South Wales*

Details: <http://austplants.com.au/9-news/latest-news/374-2016-aps-nsw-get-together.html>, but no registration form. Send an email to Lee Esdaile at pjltesdaile@gmail.com if you can't find your journal.

EHG JULY 2016 MEETING

DOROTHY LUTHER: HOLDING BACK THE CONCRETE – URBAN BUSH PROJECTS

Dorothy Luther is a member of East Hills Group. In her talk, Dorothy drew on her experience of urban bush conservation and restoration and shared interesting examples of challenges, successes and learnings.

Notes by Liz Cameron. Photos by Dorothy Luther

Dorothy spoke about a number of Inner Urban Bush Projects that have been undertaken in the Inner West of Sydney to ameliorate the encroachment of dense residential blocks and transport infrastructure. She illustrated the loss of natural areas within the city by a photo of an art installation in the CBD. *Forgotten Songs* commemorates fifty species of birds that once inhabited that area. Their calls are broadcast from a canopy of empty birdcages suspended above Angel Place. The irony is that the calls were turned down because diners at a nearby restaurant complained about the noise.

<http://www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/forgotten-songs>

Dorothy has lived in Lewisham for over 20 years, during which time the Light Rail Line and high rise apartment blocks have been built. The 'greening' of the new residential blocks by developers is often token - Dorothy looked at 15 garden design websites and only five of them featured plants: most focussed on garden furniture and decorations.

She showed examples of the wanton destruction of vegetation in streets and easements by authorities ignorant or uncaring about the importance of urban greenery. They included drastic pruning beneath powerlines, removal of trees in railway land, and big old weeping bottlebrushes on a nature strip chopped down just to extend a concrete footpath a few metres further.

But Dorothy emphasised that Inner West residents are activists and have vigorously defied the trend by re-creating green spaces. They researched the original vegetation of the area in *Missing jigsaw pieces: the bushplants of the Cooks River Valley* by Doug Benson (pictured at right), Danie Ondinea and Virginia Bear, and sourced plants from council nurseries including Marrickville Community Nursery and Rozelle Bay Community Native Nursery. Then they went to work with black plastic and garden tools to kill and remove weeds in a number of areas.

The GreenWay – a project started by the Inner West Environment Group (IWEG) in 2000 along the route of the Light Rail Line (formerly a railway goods line servicing



flour mills). The land is variously administered by local councils, the railways, and Sydney Water. In six years between 2002 and 2008 the Group created a lush green area in front of one of the old mill buildings. The intention was to plant elements of the original Sydney Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) Ironbark (*Eucalyptus fibrosa* and *E. paniculata*) Forest (STIF); there was not enough space for big trees, so most of the plantings are of understory species. The IWEG sites feature ground cover including *Themeda*, *Carex*, Blady Grass (*Imperata cylindrica* - good for smothering weeds) and *Desmodium varians* (Slender Tick-trefoil), a local pea that regenerated spontaneously. <http://www.greenway.org.au/biodiversity/bushcare>

Plantings are suited to the local conditions. In Johnson Park tiny tots (grandchildren of some of the bushcarers) have planted trees that may take a generation to mature – *Syzygiums* and *Banksia ericifolia*.

The Pigott Street site (photo at right) has richer soils and supported thickets of Lantana, Castor Oil Plant, Cestrum and Cotoneaster that sheltered a small population of long-nosed bandicoots. Extensive weed removal was followed by mulching and revegetation using over 100 native plant species found in STIF. (Motion-activated cameras were installed to monitor the bandicoots but recorded only foxes and cats; with removal of the thickets the bandicoots had lost their habitat.



This highlights the importance of retaining dead thickets to provide shelter for small animals.) Fortunately the presence of bandicoots has been confirmed elsewhere in the GreenWay.

The GreenWay area also supports a variety of small birds; in her garden beside the Light Rail Line, EHG member Chris King has recorded Superb Fairy Wrens, New Holland Honeyeaters, Eastern Spinebills and recently, Red-browed Finches. Travel by the Light Rail has become more popular because of the attractive outlook created by the GreenWay project. In July the State Government committed funds to complete the 5.8 km bicycle and pedestrian corridor connecting the Cooks River with Iron Cove by building bridges and tunnels.

Cooks River Mud Crabs – this project started with two people participating in Clean Up Australia and has grown to include more than 500. Between Campsie and Tempe more than 12,000 plants have been planted, again selected to suit varying conditions. At Foord Avenue a sandstone outcrop was regenerated with heathy shrubs – hakeas, acacias, Kangaroo Apple, *Melaleuca nodosa*; in the shady base of the cliff are ferns and small banksias, and in sunny areas ground cover includes the vine *Eustrephus latifolius* while close to the river *Juncus* is planted. Major weeds at Foord Avenue include blackberries (now removed), Madeira Vine (being controlled) and Turkey Rhubarb (a continuing problem). As a result of the work by the Mud Crabs, the area has become crowded with cyclists and walkers, birdlife and water quality have improved, and

patches of revegetation are beginning to join up.

http://www.crva.org.au/?page_id=7

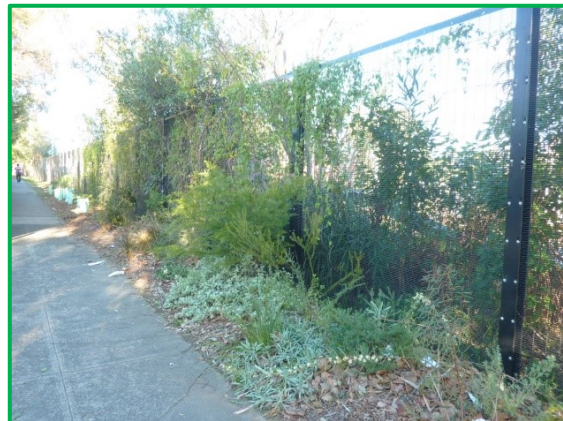
Michael Easton's Bushpocket (photo at right) – this was developed in Marrickville on a steep hill covered in boring grass and weeds. After heavy rain, stormwater would pour down the slope between the railway line and the street. A rainwater swale was created by digging a trench and diverting water from the road into the trench which was intersected by a series of sandstone barriers to slow the flow. (Subsequently a bicycle track has been built alongside, which narrows the swale and reduces its efficacy). The Bush Pocket has been extended with plantings of *Lomandra* and *Commelina*, and heathy shrubs including *Hakea sericea*, *Melaleuca hypericifolia* and Bleeding Heart (*Homolanthus populifolius*). Outcomes from this project include a pleasant place to sit, improved water quality, and reduced flooding. http://www.equatica.com.au/bush_pockets_swale.html



Dorothy's back yard has a 30 cm layer of rich soil over red clay and the land would once have supported Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest. Indigenous sclerophyll species won't grow but rainforest plants do well. An example is a very tall white-flowered Blueberry Ash which is one of the largest in the area. Dorothy is planning to attract more butterflies to her garden by providing food plants for both the adults and their caterpillars.

James' Feral Garden (photo right) – this is a verge on council land between a railway easement and pathway. It was covered in rubble, shaded by oleanders and received no rain. Plants were sourced from Marrickville Community Nursery but it is not strictly a bush regeneration site. There is an eclectic mix of plants closely spaced to create quite dense vegetation that includes a mid-story and a canopy of small trees. But the plantings ran foul of the Council's verge inspector who insisted the plants should not be taller than 1 metre!

To sum up, Dorothy outlined some of the challenges and rewards of urban bush restoration projects – they require lots of work and resources and are constrained by the amount of volunteer time and energy available. Much of the work requires bushcare skills and patience but provides pleasure through the exercise of making a garden. The vegetation attracts small creatures such as butterflies and lizards, reduces flooding and improves water quality.



In choosing what to plant in inner urban regeneration sites and gardens, Dorothy recommended considering:

- Indigenous species
- What will provide habitat for native fauna
- What is available and affordable
- What will grow in a particular site
- The space and maximum height the plant will occupy – richer soils can promote unexpected growth!

She cautioned about wholesale removal of weeds at the beginning of a project because they may:

- Provide dense habitat for native fauna – the bandicoots were living in the lantana
- Constitute a unique habitat in a local area – Wollie Creek's famous pair of Richards Pipits living in a patch of exotic reedy grasses disappeared when the exotics were removed
- Produce prolific seeds for finches and other seed eaters

It is best to replace weedy plants bit by bit, retaining the habitat and food they provide until the native species have reached a suitable height and density, and are producing alternative foods.

Dorothy concluded her entertaining and inspiring presentation on urban bush renewal with the encouraging comment that nowadays at least politicians use words like 'ecology', 'environment' and 'climate change'.

Then she played a cautionary song from the 1960s – Joni Mitchell's 'Big Yellow Taxi' - which includes the lyrics:

*They took all the trees
And put them in a tree museum
And they charged all the people
A dollar and a half to see 'em
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And they put up a parking lot.*

Wattle Walk and Talk

**Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve, Kareela
Saturday 27 August 2016**

Arrive at 9.45 am for 10 am start.

Join Rhonda Daniels from APS Sutherland Group for a walk and talk on wattles, which are easily seen in the Acacia garden and will be in glorious flower.

Learn more about this large group of plants.

The walk will take about 1 hour.

Stay for refreshments and plant sales.

Please RSVP to sutherland@austplants.com.au or 9521 8381
to help with numbers.

THE JULY PLANT TABLE

Hugh Stacy

Photos are by Brian Walters from the ANPSA website <http://anpsa.org.au/>

Plants brought to our meeting on 6 July included:

Correa backhouseana

Correa baeuerlenii (Chef's Cap Correa) (photo at right)

Correa 'Ring A Ding Ding'

Crowea exalata

Eucalyptus caesia ssp. *magna* 'Silver Princess'

Grevillea 'Big Red'

Grevillea 'Hills Jubilee'

Grevillea maccutcheonii



***Correa* 'Ring A Ding Ding'**

This lovely little plant stood about 40 cm high in a 30 cm pot, with many branches covered in deep orange-red flowers. It certainly commanded attention, which no doubt is exactly what its name intends. The hybrid involved is unknown, from a source in Victoria. No wonder Kyrill could not resist it at a local nursery.

Eucalyptus caesia* ssp. *magna

A beautiful small tree from granite outcrops in the southern wheatbelt of WA, this is both one of the most desirable and yet elusive of the eucalypts. Even the cultivar name 'Silver Princess' can evoke a childlike world of make-believe, such is the charm of its weeping habit and flowers set in silver. Yet Bentham named it in 1867 from the Latin word *caesius* = bluish-grey, noting the glaucous bloom over slender branches, foliage and fruits, without seeing any flowers.



Only his simple comment 'flowers unknown' indicated that Drummond's specimen was out of season; Bentham knew it was a eucalypt.

The subspecies *magna* is taller than subspecies *caesia*, with larger leaves, red or pink flowers to 50 mm diameter and 30 mm diameter fruits. Flowers open in winter to spring, arranged in groups of three, each on a round pedicel to 25 mm long and all subtended from a round peduncle of similar length. Massive fruits weigh heavily where the flowers nodded downwards, doffing their caps to their admirers. Slight branches bend over and hang downwards under the weight, moderating height in Sydney to about 5 m. The trunk has interesting brown bark which peels along vertical cracks, the thin skin curling tightly in strips to show a pale under-surface. This feature, common to several eucalypts, is known as minniritchi bark. The tree has a lignotuber at its base, from which new shoots may grow after major damage occurs. Since this tree occurs in areas of 30 cm winter rainfall and hot dry summers, there are several points to consider when choosing a suitable site for one in Sydney's humidity:

- The leaves are very sensitive to fungal infection, scale and insect attack. Choose a healthy plant.
- Find an open well-drained position in full sun where air flows freely, unimpeded by other plants, to avoid contact directly or by excess water dripping from them.
- Avoid watering the foliage and only water gently, as splashing soil may transfer fungal spores.
- *E. caesia* grows naturally in rocky places, where it finds protection from wind and only develops shallow roots. Hence it needs access to substantial rocks or walls or paths that can provide a means for roots to key under, particularly in sandy soil.

Grevillea maccutcheonii

This plant spreads densely to 2 m high and 3 m wide, with leaves 30 mm long of unusual shape, stem-clasping and trilobed, each lobe rounded with a distinct mid vein leading to a pungent tip. One source describes the leaves as *panduriform*, or shaped like a violin (Greek *pandoura*, a lute), which clearly applies to the lower part of the leaf, including those parts encircling the stem. Flowers appear in winter and early spring in spider clusters, with bright red styles releasing from pale yellow perianths greenish below.



This is one of the rarest grevilleas, known only from one site south east of Busselton, WA, in an area of about 240 square metres, which is within a shire reserve used partly to store materials for road maintenance. It seems that disturbance due to roadside grading has stimulated germination of seedlings; these have been recorded during annual surveys, some of them having flowered after three years, while some are still surviving. The type specimen was collected in 1993, although the first collection was made in this vicinity prior to 1992. Despite comprehensive surveys of the area in 1992-4, together with searches of local flora records since 1900, no other occurrence is known. Conservation efforts since have included propagation of some 300 plants by the WA Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority which were planted in two separate sites within the reserve in 2000 and 2001, hopefully to establish new viable populations. Various precautions include weed control, rabbit-proof fences and hygiene measures for personnel to avoid introducing *Phytophthora cinnamomi*; also the small areas involved have been treated with phosphite (of potassium, calcium, or manganese) to promote resistance to this infection. A special fire response plan for this site has been developed as part of the broader District Fire Control Working Plan.

This species was named in 1996, after Grahame McCutcheon, an officer of the Department of Conservation and Land Management who actively pursued the means taken to conserve it. Despite its occurrence in unusual conditions, shallow red sandy clay soils over ironstone, seasonally waterlogged, initial experience of cultivation suggests that in Sydney it may adapt well. Hardened cuttings of present season's growth should strike readily. Graham Fry's plant came from a local nursery.

THE BUSINESS

East Hills Group Meeting – 6 July 2016

Meeting notes by Liz Cameron.

APS East Hills Group meeting 6 July 2016 at Lugarno-Peakhurst Uniting Church

Meeting commenced at 7.45 pm after warming cups of coffee and tea.

Graham Walters (chair) welcomed members and visitors to the meeting. 13 in attendance, two apologies.

Business carried over from previous meeting

Donations to other conservation organisations:

The meeting unanimously agreed to donate \$50 each (\$200 in total) to the following organisations in 2016: Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Nature Conservation Council, Environmental Defender's Office NSW, Total Environment Centre.

Announcements:

Menai Wildflower Group – next propagation day is Saturday 6 August, starting at 1 pm. At the previous propagation day (2 July) Jan and David represented EHG and stripped out the last few plants which had failed to strike from the propagation tray and started a new tray using cutting material from the Fire Station garden. The plants already potted on by East Hills Group looked quite healthy – they include a prostrate *Eremophila* ('Kalbarri Gold'), *Chrysocephalum* and *Melaleuca* species

Sylvan Grove Visit on Wednesday 21 September – details to be discussed at the August meeting. Graham will contact Jim Mackay to arrange a guided tour. Morning tea – Liz will bring supper box, Dorothy and Kyrill have the urn, Marie O'Connor offered to make meringues. [Invite other groups?]

East Hills Girls High School Fete Saturday 10 September – Liz to submit booking form for a stall.

Future speakers at EHG meetings:

August - Sue Walters will describe the re-enactment of the Coo-ee March from Gilgandra to Sydney in which she participated last year, and the changing vegetation through which the walkers travelled.

November – Shauna Chadlowe from Australian Wildlife Conservancy.

December – Graham invited suggestions for entertainment at our Christmas meeting. Another game of Crazy Whist was suggested – it was popular last year and people should now know how to play it.

Other APS events

Week-end of 20-21 August - Regional Meeting hosted by Tamworth Group, followed by a tag-along trip to the Pilliga guided by Anthony and Annabelle O'Halloran of Bilby

Blooms: <http://austplants.com.au/9-news/latest-news/374-2016-aps-nsw-get-together.html>

Saturday 19 November - Regional Meeting hosted by the Macarthur Group at Black Stump Natives. Ben Walcott, leader of the ANPSA Garden Design Group will talk on 'Garden design: a personal perspective'.

Muogamarra Nature Reserve north of Cowan will be open for six week-ends in Spring for visitors to enjoy the spectacular wildflowers (Saturday 13th August to Sunday 18th September). Entrance fee includes cost of guided walks. For more details <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/Muogamarra-Nature-Reserve>. Blue Mountains Group is having an excursion there on Sunday 14th August.

Graham Walters read from an article by Bronte Somerset about a campaign that led to the creation of the Murrumbidgee Flora Reserves near Bermagui. It described the loss of fauna and environmental destruction wrought in the South East Forests by intensive logging for woodchips, and the dedicated rigorous community-based surveys that resulted in gaining protection for koalas. (*Nature* 60(2): 8-9 (Journal of National Parks Association of NSW)). Graham recommended the magazine and encouraged APS members to join the National Parks Association.

Speaker and EHG member Dorothy Luther spoke on the topic Holding Back the Concrete – Urban Bush Projects.

The meeting concluded with the plant table (which included Kyrill's spectacular coral-pink-flowered Ring-a-Ding-Ding Correa), the plant raffle, and supper.



Fern at Barangaroo

Photo: Jan Douglas

COMING EVENTS – CHECK YOUR DIARY!

You can find more district group events at <http://www.austplants-nsw.org.au/calendar6.html>

Wednesday 3 August 2016 From 7 for 7.30 pm start	East Hills Group meeting – Sue Foster speaking on the 2015 re-enactment of the 1915 Coo-ee recruitment march from Gilgandra to Sydney
Saturday 6 August 1 pm	East Hills Group propagation meeting with Menai Wildflower Group. Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters
Saturday 13 August From 12.30 for 1 pm start	Menai Wildflower Group meeting – Peter Olde on Grevilleas for the garden. Illawong Rural Fire Brigade Headquarters
Wednesday 17 August From 7.45 for 8 pm start	Sutherland Group meeting – Dingoes vs kangaroos vs native plants. Gymea Community Centre, 39 Gymea Bay Rd, Gymea
Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 August	APS NSW Annual Get-together – hosted by Tamworth Group. Details: http://austplants.com.au/9-news/latest-news/374-2016-aps-nsw-get-together.html , or see the April issue of <i>Native Plants for NSW</i> which includes the registration form.
Saturday 27 August	Menai Wildflower Group excursion to Muogamarra Nature Reserve. For details, contact Jason Cockayne 0411 744 715. www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/Muogamarra-Nature-Reserve
Saturday 27 August Arrive at 9.45 am for 10 am start	Wattle Walk and Talk – see page 6 for details.
Sunday 28 August	2016 Wildflower, Art and Garden Festival at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, St Ives
Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 October	FJC Rogers Seminar – Terrestrial and epiphytic orchids. Hamilton, Victoria. Details: see page 9 of July 2016 EHG newsletter.

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