

HISTORY OF THE CHILWORTH BUSH REGENERATION GROUP

WHAT IS BUSH REGENERATION?

Bush regeneration is the rehabilitation of bush from a weed-infested or other wise degraded plant community to a healthy community composed of plants which naturally occur in that area.

From a brochure on Bush Care in Hornsby Shire prepared by the Water Catchment Team Hornsby Shire Council.

BACKGROUND:

Beecroft residents have been actively involved in the preservation of local bushland for many years. John Noble, who has lived in Beecroft since 1949, was the first convenor of the Devlins Creek Reserve subcommittee. The committee was formed by the newly constituted Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust in 1964 to help care for the bushland of the area. Devlins Creek Reserve is now better known as Beecroft Reserve and Chilworth Reserve is a part of this bushland.

When the sewer lines were put down the local creeks in the early 1960's little thought was put into managing and protecting the bushland they disturbed. Surveyors plotted lines on a map with no regard for vegetation on the ground and local residents complained of large trees being marked for removal when only a minor alteration in the line of the work would have allowed them to remain. After the installation was complete no attempts were made to revegetate the area or control weed invasion. The disturbance caused by digging the trenches alongside the water courses, combined with the nutrient rich stormwater run off from increasing urban development, favoured the establishment of a number of exotic species, notably Privet, Crofton Weed and Lantana. This problem is of course not unique to Beecroft but applies to all Sydney urban bushland. The creeks which have not been disturbed in this way are still unspoiled. The same fate has happened to the creeks in the Cherrybrook area where intensive residential development began in the late 1970's.

Members of the Devlins Creek committee and other local residents formed a group to weed out Privet along Devlins Creek on the first Sunday of the month from 1965 to 1968. See attached list of some of those involved. This group must have been one of the first bush regeneration groups to form at a time when Joan and Eileen Bradley, the first proponents of bush Regeneration, were still doing their pioneering work in Mosman. It was certainly long before the concept of Bush Regeneration was recognised as a necessary part of bushland management.

John noted the degradation, particularly of the northern part of Chilworth Reserve during the years he had lived in Beecroft. As a then member of the Wildlife Preservation Society, he was concerned about its future. The land for Chilworth Reserve was originally donated to the Wildlife Preservation Society by Marie Byles parents in 1938. It was handed on to the care and control of Hornsby Shire Council in 1942. The area received little in the way of care and control in the intervening years and by 1991 was in a sorry state. Half of the northern section of the reserve was so badly weed infested that only the canopy trees remained and many had already been killed by a vine called *Pithecoctenium cyanchoides* (Monkey's comb) from Uruguay. Other weeds included:- Privet, Coral Trees, Cannas, Ginger, Lantana, Arundo Grass, Ochna, Honeysuckle, Morning Glory and Tradescantia. There were almost no native understorey plants and only 15 native species could be recorded in this part of Chilworth Reserve.

The northern part of the reserve had been left isolated from the larger southern area by the development of an acre block of private bushland in 1987. This is now No 33 York St. Before this development the land was still in its natural state and was previously owned by Bauldur Byles, Marie's brother. If it could have been added to the reserve it would have provided a link between the two areas of the reserve. It would have made a valuable addition to the local bushland, particularly in the event of the M2 some 10 years on. It was suggested in a draft letter from the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust in May 1966 to the Department of Main Roads, that Bauldur Byles might have considered donating the land as an addition to Beecroft Reserve but unfortunately this did not eventuate. In April 1986 John Noble wrote to the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust suggesting that representation be made to Hornsby Council to acquire this block of land to add to Chilworth Reserve and compensate for the loss of bushland for the proposed Castlereagh Expressway. However the land was sold to a private developer and there was never any move made by the Council to purchase it. The land was worth \$150,000 when it was sold in 1987.

In the 1990's with the loss of bushland for the M2 it is almost impossible to acquire additional land to augment the areas reserves, so it is even more important to maintain the condition of the remaining bushland. However it is still not easy to obtain funding from local government for bush regeneration work and the first contract funded by Hornsby Shire Council in Beecroft Reserve was for \$10,000 in 1997. Until then the only Bush Regeneration done in the reserve was done by volunteers.

WHERE:

Chilworth Reserve is situated between the end of Mary St. and York St. Beecroft and extends down to Devlins Creek. It is part of a corridor of bushland along Devlins Creek from Pennant Hills Golf Course to Cheltenham Oval known as Beecroft Reserve. See attached brochure on Beecroft Reserve which includes a map and information on the history of the area.

WHEN:

The Chilworth Bush Regeneration Group began work in Chilworth Reserve in June 1991 and work is still ongoing in 1999.

WHO:

John Noble is still a member of the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust's Parks Committee and has inspired other members of the committee to follow his example in bush regeneration. These include Jenifer Lewis, Sheila Woods, Tony Lewis (past convenor), Eva Jones and Ross Walker, the present convenor.

Sheila saw a notice in the Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust Bulletin in 1987 asking for volunteers to help a Bush Regeneration group which was started in 1977 by Florence Dwight at the end of Day Road, Cheltenham. (See attached information from Florence on her group.) After helping the Day Road group a few times Florence suggested that Sheila might like to help Jenifer Lewis who was trying to start a new group in Beecroft Reserve.

Jenny started the bush regeneration group in 1987 to work in part of Beecroft Reserve behind her house in Lynbrae Avenue. Good progress was made by Jenny and as an experienced botanist she gave valuable training to other volunteers in the area before Hornsby Council began their Volunteer Bushcare program in 1989.

Eva was also a member of Florence's group and carried on as its co-ordinator after Florence moved to Tasmania in 1990. In 1993 Eva started helping the Chilworth group and so was involved with two groups for some years until the Day Road Group stopped working due to the ill health of their elderly members in 1996.

Tony and Ross have both helped the Chilworth Group and made a valuable contribution to the work in the reserve.

In 1991 Jenny became very involved in fighting the proposed M2 motorway through Beecroft Reserve and could not continue to supervise her group. It was then that John Noble asked if some of the members of Jenny's group could do some work in Chilworth Reserve. At the request of John four of the members of Jenny's group began to work in the northern part of Chilworth Reserve on 21st June 1991.

The original four were:-

Sheila Woods	Grace Ave. Beecroft	1991 - present
Co-ordinator of group.		
Pat Hersey	Telopea Rd Mt. Colah.	1991 - present
John Single	Montview Pde Hornsby	1991 - present
Esme Blackmore		1991 - present

Worcester Place, Warawee, but formally of Mahers Road, Beecroft. Esme's house was demolished with the rest of the houses in Mahers Road in 1995 for the construction of the M2.

The group arranged to work every Friday, initially in the afternoon as it was winter but soon changed to the morning from 9.00am to 12 noon and this has remained the working time until the present. Between 1993 and 1997 a Sunday group worked on the last Sunday morning of the month to accommodate members who could not come during the week. Sheila and Esme decided to do the Bush Regeneration course at Ryde Tafe in 1992 to try and substitute the guidance previously given by Jenny. They both enjoyed the course very much and learned a lot but the task ahead still seemed very daunting.

The original four still work regularly in 1999 and have been joined by a number of other local residents over the years. Most of the members of the group are retired or work part time but a number of young people have made a valuable contribution to the work before acquiring full time employment or completing a project such as a Queens Scout or Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Other members:

Doug Unmack	Lamorna Ave.	Beecroft	May 1992 - present	W	
Amelia Jones	Fiona Rd	Beecroft	Jul 1992 - Mar 1994	W	Y
Tony Lewis	Cobran Av	Cheltenham	Jan 1992 - Feb 1996	W	
Ross Walker	Hull Rd	Beecroft	Jul 1992 - present	O	
Joan Wallace	Albert Rd	Beecroft	Sep 1992 - Dec 1992	W	
Sharon Brookes	Chilworth Pl	Beecroft	Jul 1993 - Dec 1997	M	
Alan Peters	Hannah St	Beecroft	Sep 1993 - Jun 1994	W	
Jenny Brown	Beecroft Rd	Beecroft	Apr 1994 - May 1996	M	Y
Shanta Sankaran	Austral Av	Beecroft	Feb 1995 - Dec 1995	W	Y
Hette Meyer	Hannah St	Beecroft	Feb 1995 - Jun 1997	W	
Justine Ross	Hannah St	Beecroft	May 1995 - Aug 1995	W	Y
Christine Austin	Copeland Rd	Beecroft	Nov 1995 - present	W	
Ramsay Underwood	Mary St	Beecroft	Nov 1995 - present	W	
Rebecca Anderson	Chapman Av	Beecroft	Jan 1996 - Oct 1996	M	Y
Dane Austin	Copeland Rd	Beecroft	Feb 1996 - Oct 1996	M	Y
Donald Bartho	York St	Beecroft	Jul 1996 - present	W	
Jamie Ferguson	Pacific Hwy	Hornsby	May 1997 - Dec 1997	W	Y
James Van Bree		Wahroonga	Apr 1999 - present	W	Y

W = weekly attendance M = monthly O = occasional Y = under 30

Other people have come to help from time to time including students from Beecroft School and Scouts and Venturers from 2nd Beecroft Scouts.

At each working session some members of the group work together, particularly when doing follow up weeding on an area that has been cleared of weeds previously and has both weeds and natives growing back. Other members prefer the more vigorous primary clearing of weeds such as Lantana and they often work on their own but we all meet together for morning tea at 10.30am on the dot. This is a most important part of the morning as we can all have a chat as well as discuss our progress. Not surprisingly many members of the group have become close friends and do a lot of other things together such as walks and theatre visits and 4 members currently belong to the Australian Plant Society. It is a social activity albeit different from golf or bowls.

Doug Unmack has undertaken the mowing of the grass around the 1st Beecroft Scout Hall from 1993 to the present. He also regularly mows the area at the bottom of York St and Kenwick Lane which was cleared by the group of its weed burden in February 1994. Council mowed this area for a few years but in 1998 the area was taken off its contract list leaving it to the group to maintain.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

NORTHERN SECTION OF CHILWORTH RESERVE: The work done in the reserve has been recorded in detail but this is a very short summary:

At the time of writing in February 1999 the group is still working regularly with usually 6 - 8 people attending on any Friday morning. The northern section of Chilworth Reserve now looks very different with the primary removal of weeds completed by the end of 1998. Most of the areas on the western side of the creek worked on between 1991 -1995 have regenerated well and need only periodic maintenance while others, particularly along the sewer line in the floodplain of the creek, need regular monitoring. Work on the severely degraded eastern side of the reserve was started in 1996 when Ramsay Underwood started helping the group. He was not as daunted by the task as the rest of the group and did a lot of the primary clearing single handed. Despite its appalling condition this part of the reserve is starting to regenerate nicely and the group are now concentrating on regular follow up weeding to stabilize the cleared areas.

This is the most crucial stage of any bush regeneration project, to encourage the native species which are regenerating naturally and control weed regrowth.

In years to come hopefully the young trees and shrubs regenerating now will mature to form some semblance of the original tall forest community on this side of the creek. There are now over 80 species growing in this area where only 15 were recorded in 1992.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

1999 will see a lot more follow up weeding on the areas cleared in 1996 - 1998 plus maintenance weeding on the rest of the northern section of Chilworth Reserve. More primary weeding will be done extending down into the southern area of Chilworth where the bush is generally in much better condition. It is planned to improve the condition of the bush near the entrance to the reserve at the end of Austral Avenue and perhaps in 2000 to revegetate the mowed area at the end of York St and Austral Avenue. Beecroft School could help with this project by growing some of the plants required and helping to plant them. There is still plenty of bushland needing attention and we hope its condition will slowly improve. It would be of great assistance if the M2 tollway could also contribute by managing the bushland under its control using bush regeneration techniques and professional bush regenerators.

Several other Bush Regeneration Groups have formed and are active in the Beecroft and Cheltenham area:-

John Noble	Observatory Park, Beecroft.	1989 - present
Helen Clarke	Narena Close, Beecroft.	1991 - present
Bambara Group	Between Roselea School and Midson Rd.	1993 - present
Graeme Widmer	Castle Howard Rd, Beecroft	1996 - present