



FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

'connecting people with the park through education, volunteering, and philanthropy'

February 2018 Newsletter

Next meeting

26 April 2018

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Newsletter

Submissions to editor@friendsofroyal.com.au



Welcome!

'Friends' has been planning a newsletter for some time, and now it has happened! Along with the friendsofroyal.org.au website and on [facebook](#), this newsletter will keep you up to date with goings-on of 'Friends' and in the 'Royal'. We intend to publish once every two months and deliver straight to your inbox (so make sure your details are up to date!). This issue we are fortunate to have some interesting reads and many thanks must go to those who contributed articles, information, and time. Suggestions about content, layout, or ideas for articles are very welcome, please send to editor@friendsofroyal.com.au.

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President's Letter [John Arney]

Dear Friends of Royal,

Firstly a welcome and thank you on behalf of the Committee to Tristan Cooper for undertaking the role of newsletter coordinator, with this journal perhaps being a long overdue accessory to our organisation and one which I hope will grow in both depth and standing as we progress into the future.

Contact 'Friends'

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Vice-President: Bruce Cooper

Secretary: Basil Ellis

Treasurer: Ralph Cartwright

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As many of you would know, the Royal has served as a playground and weekend escape for numerous residents across southern Sydney. It has also served as a life-shaping location for family picnics, bushwalks and outdoor adventures, providing indelible memories that have enriched our lives. In more recent times it has become a key tourism and interstate destination, showcasing unique geography, fauna and flora close to the City-centre that surely cannot be surpassed by any city of similar population anywhere in the world.

Sydney itself continues to grow at a blistering rate, consuming urban green-space in all its shapes and forms. Higher population, coupled with increased tourist visitation, continues to place great pressure on the Royal and our National Parks network as more of us seek refuge from the burgeoning urban environment. It goes without saying, if Parks are not properly resourced and managed to cater to this pressure, the trend will undoubtedly result

in the long-term degradation of our National Park estate. Under pressure, the Royal becomes more important with every year that passes.

This being the first FoR newsletter I feel that I am somewhat obliged to write to you in a positive vein. However, many of you will be aware that this newsletter comes at a time when, distressingly, our National Parks and Wildlife Service continues to reel from a drawn-out and far-reaching restructuring process implemented over many years, that appears to have removed a significant number of highly qualified and experienced staff from within the Service. Additionally, reliable sources have reported significant cuts to State Government Budget allocations for our National Parks. In response to these issues there appears to have been an unprecedented number of articles and letters published in the mainstream media from a broad cross-section of the public, decrying both the current state of Parks, and the job losses. Our beloved Royal has not escaped this attention.

Lastly, many of you knowing my personal passion for this topic, would perhaps be disappointed if I did not comment on the January fire that has burnt just over 2000ha of the Park.

The fire posed a significant threat to Royal visitors which cannot be understated, and it is only by chance there are some positives to take from it. I note that there is a good depth of ash in several areas which suggests a hot, but not too hot fire which should support regrowth without long-term damage. Coupled with the controlled burns of 2017, this latest fire would appear to now provide a solid foundation for future planned burns and that with diligence and proper resources, Royal



Bushland following the recent fires.

management will be able to regain control of the fire regimes, and reduce the chances of uncontrollable wildfires within the Park well into the future.

I hope that you enjoy reading our newsletter and would like to thank each contributor to this first issue. I also look forward to future contributions given the diverse range of interests of our membership base. Especially in the early days of the newsletter, we would also appreciate your comments, feedback, critique and suggestions.

John Arney
President
Friends of the Royal National Park Incorporated



Fire-affected areas along a section of Sir Bertram Stevens Drive.

Founding 'Friends' [Michael Treanor]

Royal National Park has a unique place in so many people's lives, with its history, beautiful landscapes and diverse array of flora and fauna, its accessibility and experiences around every corner. From a high school bushwalking trip in the late 80's to studying environmental and national park management, Royal had an early, and increasingly strong, place in my psyche, its importance as 'the' national park and its role in future of conservation.

Having been part of community and volunteer groups for nearly 30 years I know something of the desire, passion and dedication that drives people to be involved and engaged with a place like Royal National Park. It was not long after starting my role as Manager of Royal, Heathcote and Garrawarra reserves in 2008 that I began to meet many of the individuals and groups that had a strong connection, involvement and interest in the area. Unlike some parks I had either worked or volunteered in, Royal had more than just a few environmentally-minded volunteers or interest groups focused on heritage or recreational access. It had, and very much still has, a significant diversity of groups and individuals from a range of backgrounds, motivations, and interests.

Overwhelmingly, there was a common thread amongst all the groups and individuals for the protection and appreciation of the Royal National Park and surrounding reserves, and that the community were at the heart of this. I saw an opportunity to bring together the range of sometimes disparate groups to (at least) share information and updates on the management of Royal, and hopefully to form connections and networks, to work collectively on projects and issues, and to share ideas, news and a common interest. A brainstorm with the driving-force behind volunteers and community engagement in the park, ranger Patsy Nagle and others, identified over 100 groups and individuals that could be interested in getting together in some form which I loosely entitled the 'Friends of Royal'.

Invitations were sent out for a community forum to be held on Saturday 12th September 2009, to gauge the interest and talk about how we could pull together such a group. We were overwhelmed with the number and range of responses. At the forum I outlined what I thought

the group could be, initially and into the future. Importantly I felt that the Friends needed to be run by members, maintaining an independence from NPWS while having an active and cooperative relationship with the park managers. The opportunity was there for the group to be a voice for the park and be so much more engaged in studying, protecting and sharing ideas and issues on the park.

There is an acknowledgement that some of the groups involved perhaps don't always see eye-to-eye or have the same vision of how Royal should be accessed or used, however I believe that this diversity, and the ability for sharing, learning and connecting, is one of the strengths of the Friends.

At the heart of the Friends is still the aim of fostering cooperation, establishing a strong link between NPWS and the community, and volunteering in a range of areas. The future holds opportunities for the Friends to be involved in philanthropy and funding projects, advocating and educating on the importance of the park and threats to it, and engaging in new ways with the parks management and future plans.

Royal National Park, out of nearly all other parks, is the people's park, from its establishment as the 'lungs of Sydney', to its pivotal role in the establishment of the conservation movement and as a model for national parks and their management, the community and the parks' supporters have played a vital role. The Friends of Royal has much to be proud of, the massive contribution and sense of purpose, and an essential role it will have in the future protection of the Royal.

Royal Bushies [John Arney]

On 7 December, the 2017 volunteers Christmas party was held at Wattle Forest. Before lunch, a short walk was taken southwards along the River. This well-worn track is a popular location for bird enthusiasts, offering a mixed habitat for both water and forest birds. Around late October last year, multiple sightings of a Red-crowned Fruit Dove over a couple of weeks drew several local 'birdo's' to the area. The Christmas party itself was attended by around 25 volunteers and



Royal Bushies clearing the Karingal Track on 8 Feb. 2018

several



L to R - Basil Ellis, FoR Secretary, Shaun Elwood, Royal Areas Manager, Gemma White,, and Adrian Johnstone, Royal Area Operation Co-ordinator, presenting Basil with his certificate and a key-

NPWS staff. After lunch the newly appointed Royal Areas Manager, Shaun Elwood, was introduced to the group and this was followed by presentations and awards for services rendered throughout the year, a rewarding day was had by all. 2018 has re-started with the volunteers stepping into their 2-day-a-week routine, (Thursday and Saturday). On 8 Feb. Neville Beth and the crew visited Red Cedar Flat to continue maintenance of the well-made Karingal Track, beginning on the eastern side of Lady Wakehurst Drive, off the Loop Track and heading southwards. (Lots of

steps but a beautiful location.) The day was finished-off with litter collection on the Flat and some weeding in the creek. The current calendar lists a varied program up to the end of March, with perhaps just a few minor changes to be made due to the recent fires. The April - June calendar will be developed by Neville and the volunteers with assistance from NPWS Ranger Matt Springall.



Royal Bushies at Red Cedar Flat on 8 Feb. 2018

What's on

Sutherland Bushwalkers

Walks in the Royal until 31 March. Anyone wishing to enquire about a walk should contact Sutherland Bushwalkers through our email info@sutherlandbushwalkers.org.au. Full details about our Club can also be found on the web site <http://www.sutherlandbushwalkers.org.au>.

3 March / BUSHWALK / ROYAL NP: A heathland and coastal walk with swims along the way. Park on Bundeena Drive and walk to the coast via Deer Pool on the Marley Track. Visit the Marley beaches and views of Marley Lagoon then walk south along the coast track and then a fire trail loop back to the cars. 14km.

7 March / BUSHWALK / SWIM / ROYAL NP: Cronulla Ferry to Bundeena, short walk to Jibbon Beach, around headland, view Aboriginal rock art, and down coast to Shelly Beach. Time for couple of swims. 6km.

Australian Plants Society

All meetings held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Gymea Community Centre from 7.45pm...

21st March / SPEAKER / Jayne Hanford: Biodiversity in urban wetlands - influences on mosquitoes breeding and the breeding success of Green and Golden Bell frogs.

18th April / SPEAKER / Lloyd Hedges. Flannel Flower propagation techniques.

National Parks Association (Southern Sydney Branch)

The National Parks Association is a volunteer, non-profit community group.

28 February / FREE TALK / SLIDESHOW: "Bhutan's Environmental Successes: What, How and Why". 8pm. Multi-Purpose Centre [123 Flora St Sutherland](#) (near Belmont St). All Welcome. Contact: ssydney@npansw.org.au.

Linnean Society of NSW

Check the website <http://linneansocietynsw.org.au/> for events in March and April.

Park Updates [John Arney]

Fire Impacts

One of the biggest impacts of the recent fires has been the loss of substantial sections of the newly installed boardwalk on the coast track, between Wattamolla and the Northern Headland at Garie Beach, along with stockpiles of new track materials and the contractor's tools and machinery. Also impacted by fire have been sections of the older galvanised-steel boardwalks and some bridges. It is anticipated at this early stage that the affected part of the coast track could be closed for up to 6 months for the clean-up and replacement works, however, reopening of this iconic track will receive a very high priority.

New Faces in the Royal

Shaun Elwood took over the role of Area Manager from December, and Ranger, Matthew Springall, is on secondment from Lane Cove NP. Other staff working from the Royal Office are Margaret Phillips, front desk; Adrian Johnstone, Team Leader, Rangers ; Rangers: David Croft, Barry Hodgson, Mishy Mckensy, Gemma White, Anita Zubovic and part time weekend ranger Phoebe Colbrelli-Cox. In addition to his main responsibilities, Matt Springall will act as the go-to person for the volunteers. At the Royal Workshop, Craig Evans is due back soon to resume his role as manager, one that has been ably filled in his absence by Simon Hawke.

An Unlucky Day

We have had a confirmed if somewhat sketchy report of visitor to Audley in January who hired a boat, had an argument with his girlfriend, was somehow bitten on both arms by a goanna, and then to top off the day, was bitten by a black snake. We don't know if he had broken a mirror in the lead-up to the day, but we would love to get his opinion on which of the three incidents was the worst. We hope he's ok!

'Dedication of (Royal) National Park 1879' [Judith Carrick]

The Australian landscape was not as spectacular as the American nor as genteel as the English; it was unusually rugged "rubbish country", with trees that to some, held no beauty but to others reminded them of England.

Between 1810-1821 Governor Macquarie regularly stayed at Old Government House because he preferred the clean air and space of rural Parramatta to the unsanitary and crime ridden streets of Sydney Town. During Macquarie's time the grounds of Old Government Park became a Gentlemen's Park. It was not until 1858 it was gazetted as a public Park; now Parramatta Park.

In the late 1870s Sydney was becoming overcrowded, sewerage systems were not coping and sickness, especially in the young where one in four infants were dying, had become a problem for the government. When Ashfield Park was being proposed in 1878 (completed in 1885) Sir Henry Parkes (Colonial Secretary and Premier of NSW) supported the notion with vigour - he is reported saying:

"...it was most desirable not only because of its natural beauty - because it afforded the means of public enjoyment and refined pleasure, but also because it would give scope for physical culture, and it was important to develop (sic) the physical energy of the people, as well as to cultivate their mental faculties...and that for the sake of the future health, future enjoyment and future culture of the population thus growing...would not only be a park for the Ashfield people only...but a park for the use and enjoyment of a great part of the population of Sydney."

Frank Farnell responded: "Although a national park, it would be for the people of Ashfield..."

On February 18th 1879 John Lucas, who was responsible for the reservation of Jenolan Caves (1866), moved the following resolution, which was passed on the 21st March, 1879:

That this house will, on Friday next [deferred], resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolution:-

1. The health of the people should be one of the first objects of all good government, and to ensure healthy consequences, a vigorous and intelligent community, it is necessary that all cities, towns, villages and such other centres of population should possess parks, and pleasure grounds as places of recreation.



[Plate 2 John Lucas, Mitchell Library]

2. That immediately after the survey of any Crown Lands as the sites of future cities, towns or villages, a sufficient number of blocks should be reserved as sites for schools, and other public buildings, and that every 5th section of land, and at least 640 acres, should be dedicated as parks, pleasure grounds, or other like places of public recreation...

Sir John Robertson (Premier of NSW at various intervals between 1860

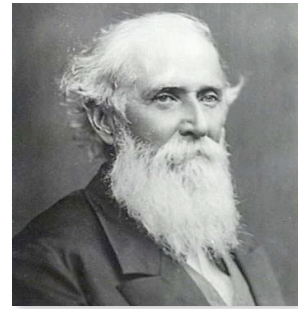


[Plate 1 Frank Farnell, State Library]

and 1886) requested a survey of the boundary of the proposed park by W. Freeman (Surveyor General) who presented this report dated February 24th 1879:

It was in this atmosphere that National Park was created, the following list shows the sequence of events:

- January 2nd, 1874 a large portion of land in the County of Cumberland...“shall be preserved from sale pending selection of Railway Line and other public purposes...”
- March 31st, 1879, 18,000 acres south of Sydney were “Reserved from sale for a National Park...”
- April 26th, 1879 that land was dedicated “...for the purpose of a National Park...”
- August 3rd, 1880, when the area of the Park was expanded to 35,000 acres, the notice read: “... having been pleased to approve of the extensions of the National Park...and which is hereby dedicated as the National Park”
- April 16th, 1886 National Park was also listed to be a Public Park under the Public Parks Act 1854 and that it be known by the name of “National Park”.



[Plate 3, Sir John Robinson, NPWS RNP]

The purpose of the creation of National Park was to provide an healthy environment for recreation and pleasure for the people, as instructed in the 1887 Deed of Grant (see below). This differed from that of the purpose of the first parks in America; which was for pleasure plus preservation.

[Taken from "History of Royal National Park", author Judith Carrick, 2017]

Remembering Jim Callaway [John Arney]

3 August, 1936 – 18 January, 2018, aged 81 years.

Though not a FoR member himself, many of our members will remember Jim for his involvement in a variety of activities within the Park, namely, until more recent years, bushwalking, biodiversity studies and bush regeneration and weed control. In bushwalking circles Jim had made a name for himself as a point to point walker, usually following the quickest way to the chosen objective, a pastime where sightseeing was forsaken for the challenge of how quickly the destination could be reached. For Jim, the 25km Otford to Bundeena Coast Track, which for many is a 2 day walk, was just a morning stroll. At his funeral service it was stated that he was, (affectionately), sometimes known as “Tear-away-Callaway”. In his time, and for over 40 years, Jim had been an office bearer for several NSW Bushwalking Clubs as well as a member of several other environmentally credentialed organisations. (His last walk with the Australian Plants Society was in 2009). In the ‘Royal’ Jim had been a valuable member of the set-up and monitoring teams for the Biodiversity studies, where the re-establishing of the monitoring lines required selective yet often heavy hand clearing, and later restoration. Until a few years ago, at Burning Palms, Jim had helped set-up and care for several fenced plots for the restoration of native vegetation, and where he had taken on the battle to control Mother of Millions and Crofton Weed. His funeral on 30 January was well attended by past and serving NPWS staff as well as many of his friends and past associates. To Jim’s wife Pat, and family, we forward our sincere condolences.



Jim Callaway as most people saw him, with his trusty back-pack, heading off into the distance
