

February 2025
Circulation 1,364

The Whisper

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Bywong Community www.bywongcommunity.org.au

Fire Brigade <http://wamboin.rfsa.org.au>

Bywong and Wamboin Facilities and Contacts

Bywong Community	Justin Jarvis - President	0404 460 568	president@bywongcommunity.org.au
Bywong Hall Bookings	Bookings Officer		lrrhallbywong@gmail.com
Church - Anglican	Gai Donald - Warden	0438 400 364	peterandandrew2012@gmail.com
Community Nurse	Heather Morrison - Bungendore	6238 1333	
Wamboin Rural Fire Brigade	Neville Schroder - Captain	0409 991 340	wamboincaptain@gmail.com
Geary's Gap Pony Club	Cameron Smith	0419 449 747	
Golf	Ken Gordon	0455 839 840	ken.gordon1962@gmail.com
Injured Wildlife	Wildcare - Helpline	6299 1966	
Justice of the Peace	Andrew Stainlay - JP	0408 469 880	stains@bigpond.net.au
Justice of the Peace	Leanne (Lee) Ward - JP	0411 207 317	leannefward@gmail.com
KYB Bible Study Group	Robyn Doran	6238 3469	rdoran4@bigpond.com
Landcare	Kathy Handel - Treasurer	6238 3596	khandel@bigpond.net.au
NSW SES (assist - storm/flood)	NSW Call Centre	132 500	
NSW SES Bungend. (non-urgent)	After Hours Duty Officer	6238 0222	
Sutton School Playgroup	Felicity - Contact Person	0413 174 204	Playgroup.sutton@gmail.com
Table Tennis	Mike Muston	0406 606 238	Mike_muston@gmail.com
Wamboin Community Assoc.	Jenny Richards - President	0490 020 165	president@wamboincommunity.asn.au
Wamboin-Bung. Book Group	Sally Saunders	0419 303 229	sally.saunders1@bigpond.com
Wamboin Hall Bookings	Joan Mason	6238 3258	wamboinhall@gmail.com
Wamboin Markets	Meriel Schultz	6238 3309	lmsconsulting@bigpond.com
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The Wamboin Whisper: The Whisper is a monthly community newsletter established in 1981 by and owned by the Wamboin Community Association. The Whisper is printed at Elect Printing in Fyshwick at the start of each month, excluding January. It is distributed to every letterbox in Wamboin, Bywong and Queanbeyan-Palerang Council residents just southeast of the Federal Highway. Each issue goes to volunteer deliverers by the first Sunday of the month and is also then available at www.wamboincommunity.asn.au. Any proceeds from advertisements in The Whisper after printing costs go to the Wamboin Community Association.

Contributions to the Whisper: Contributions from all residents are encouraged, valued and the main content of the newsletter. The current editor is Ned Noel, 17 Reedy Creek Place, Wamboin, 2620, phone 0409 997 082. Paul Downey of Cooper Road also shares the editing. Please email contributions to nednoel@optusnet.com.au or mail them or drop them off. On contentious matters the Wamboin Community Association will strive to maintain a balanced view, by seeking advice from the editorial team and by seeking alternative views to be published in the same edition.

The deadline for each issue is the last Sunday night of the month before. There is, by tradition, no January Whisper, mainly to give all its volunteer workers a rest. The **deadline for the March 2025 issue is 7 pm Sunday night, February 23, 2025.** **Advertising prices,** per issue, based on rough fraction of the inside the margins A4 area: 1/8 \$24 1/6 29 1/4 \$35 1/3 \$44 1/2 \$70 2/3 \$97 Full Page \$140. email or phone the editor as above.

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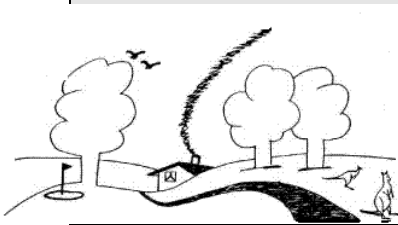
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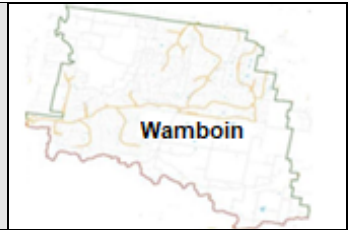
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Wamboin Community Association President's Notes



Welcome back to a new year. 2025 promises to be a big one.

1. **Annual Christmas Carols Night.** Our annual Christmas Carols Night (held 6th December last year) was an outstanding success. Close to 100 people attended this event and spent an enjoyable evening rounding off the year. As always my thanks go to all those involved who all put in an outstanding effort.
2. **Clean Up Australia Day.** If you read further on in this copy of the Whisper you will find information regarding this great event. Wamboin is not able to officially join the event because of restrictions laid upon it by QPRC (please read article) but no one can stop people picking up rubbish in their front yards or perhaps slightly wider afield. On Clean Up Australia Day if you have collected a large amount of rubbish feel free to take it to the Hall for disposal..
3. **Monthly Meetings Resume.** The Wamboin Community Association's monthly meetings resume in February on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. These are held at the Community Hall at **7:30 pm**. All residents of Wamboin are welcome to attend these meetings.

Well that's it for now. No doubt the Community Association will be busy soon with all sorts of events so keep in touch.

Jenny Richards – President.

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President's Message

It's been a wonderful time in Bywong over Christmas and we have had all of the summer weather varieties. But as we return to reality its time for the Whisper again.

The Bywong Community Association had the honour of co-sponsoring (with the Wamboin Community) the Christmas driveway and letterbox decorating competition. This year the battle was bigger and better than last year. The increased numbers of entrants this year which is a nod to the Wonderful Women of Wamboin and Gail who has been putting this competition on for a very long time. The winners of the **BEST DRIVEWAY** were Dres, Crystal, Grace and Zoe, on Norton road and the **BEST LETTERBOX** were Colin and Sam on Bingley way. These guys were the top of quite a field and we congratulate their skill and effort. They both won an amazing hamper from Pauline Segeri on Norton Road

We are now moving from a restful Christmas and New Year period into the delights of the Car Boot Sale. The Car boot Sale is our biggest event for the year and is a major fundraiser and with that in mind we like to get everyone excited..

The Car Boot Sale, is the classic "bring your stuff down and sell it" type event. If you have things that you need to buy, this is probably the place to do it and if you need to catch up with a friend you haven't seen for a while they will almost certainly be at the Car Boot Sale...

So far the planning is going well. We have been in discussions with the **Bungendore Guides** who are lining up again for an amazing **Devonshire team** room, We have **Wildcare** and **Landcare**, some representatives from **QPRC** all planning to come down. We are lucky to have the **Wamboin RFS** assisting us again as one of our long-term community relationships.

So .. Start getting your things ready for Sale. If you need to make space in your shed, if you have some things in the shed, or small furniture that you no longer want, maybe some arts and craft or maybe you have a secret talent at making things. This is the place. If you have some friends get together and make a stand and have the chance to peruse the other stands. This is always a great event. Hopefully it'll be a nice Sunday so come one come all. March 23 is the day in question. Sellers arrive from 7 to set up, buyers from 9 am till 12. – **Justin Jarvis**



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Callouts and what we have been up to.

Since the last Whisper, the brigade has been busy with 3 x MVA's, 1 x BBQ fire, 1 Powerline down, and 2 grass fires.

Eaglehawk/Federal Highway fire, January 5, 2025.



The biggest possible fire threat to our area occurred on January 5. A grass fire on the Federal Highway quickly spread to both sides of the highway and into the median strip. The fire was headed in an easterly direction towards Sutton Park and Wamboin/Bywong. Wamboin, Sutton, Bungendore, Ridgeway, Queanbeyan, Gundaroo RFS brigades, ACT and NSW fire and rescue, and ACT Parks & Conservation attended, to bring the fire under control. The nearby resort was evacuated, and a threat to the adjacent fuel station was of concern at the time. The fire was



brought under control as it entered bushland just before an adjacent pine plantation. For those that attended, it was evident that this was a fire to our west, and history has repeated that almost all major fires have come from this direction. If the winds were slightly different on the day, it could have been a similar picture to the 1979 or 1985 fires that went through our area, and with close to one thousand more homes in that area, property losses would have been a very real possibility.

Do you need a property inspection to help you with your Bushfire Survival Plan?

Do you have a Bushfire Survival Plan? Is your Plan up to Date? Need some advice on how to prepare your property?

Getting ready for a bush fire is easier than you think. By taking 20 minutes with your family to discuss what you will do during a fire, you could save their lives, as well as your home.



Need some advice on how to prepare your property?

Property assessments are a key part of engaging with our community about bush fire safety. The Wamboin brigade is actively and regularly visiting homes to help residents to identify and mitigate potential risks to your home and to guide you and your family in developing a personalised bush fire survival plan. Here we can provide guidance on many of the common



household hazards and how they can be managed.

Property Protection Inspections: Know the bush fire threat.

During your 30-45 minute high-level property inspection, the Wamboin RFS team will assist you to determine the bush fire threat of your property. With a focus on the types of bush fire threats and topographical features that would impact your home if there was a bush fire threat in the area.

Are you prepared to keep your family safe?

Regardless of your decision to Leave Early or Stay and Defend, you still need to prepare your property against the threat of a bush fire and ember attack. The Wamboin RFS team will provide you with a property preparation checklist and useful tips for bush fire safety.

A well-prepared home is more likely to survive a bush fire even if you leave early.

How to find us:

At the Wamboin Markets, every 3rd Saturday of the month between 9am -12pm

Or you can email us "Attention Community Engagement Team" - wamboincaptain@gmail.com

Till next time, stay safe! - Don Evans (Deputy Captain)

Membership enquiries
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Wamboin Golf - December

Sunday 1 December was the date for the 2024 Wamboin Golf Club Christmas Cup. It really was a merry occasion with a great turn out of nineteen players venturing out to play all attired in their Christmas bling. The course was in great condition which may account for some very low scores that the handicapper will need to scrutinize. The sponsors this month were Matt Hawke and the Hansens. We thank them for the refreshments and prizes. The introduction for the best dressed Christmas theme was well received and definitely here to stay. We welcomed Tony Bond this month on his return to the golf course after a short hiatus (around 20 years).



The nine-hole competition was played using the Western course this month. The 9-hole competition was taken out by Ewan Prest (48/26) from Scott Mason (40/27) and Steve Lambert (41/29). Emma Hansen was the winner of the junior competition. We have also had an update on Robert Thompson's latest results with a 4th place finish in his age-group in the US Kids Golf challenge in Melbourne. Off to New Zealand next.

The eighteen-hole competition was very tightly contested with Col Urquhart (84/58) winning from Glenn

Crafter (75/62) and David Bailey (82/62). Handicapper is sharpening up the trimming tools. Ball winners for longest drives and nearest the pins went to: Col U (3), Ken G (2), Glenn C, David B, Paul G, Tim B and Steve L. The googly ball was handed to Pete Harrison who after three attempts found Steve Lambert's golf ball as the fourth ball found. The dummy spit was shared around with the first recipient being Steve Lambert for complaining that he never wins a Long drive/Nearest the Pin. It then moved to Scott Mason for seeking a stewards enquiry into a potential rule infraction. Handicapper will investigate and make appropriate adjustments!! The Ted Evans Joke reminded us not to lie with a pig.

Next month, the January event will be on Sunday 5 January 2025 and sponsored by Libby and Larry King. We will contest the traditional 9-hole, 3-club event, commencing at 2:30. – **Ken Gordon**

January

Sunday 5 January 2025. A hardy group of 15 golfers welcomed the New Year by playing a nine-hole, three club event. A hot day was predicted and a couple of golfers took advantage of the option of an early start in an attempt to beat the heat. The sponsors this month were L & L King and we thank them for the refreshments and



prizes. We welcomed Natalie K (a visitor from Bungendore). We look forward to seeing Natalie again. The competition was played using the Western course this month.

The junior competition was taken out by Robert Thompson (43/31). The winner of the open competition was Pete Harrison (44/28) from Vicki Still (41/29) with

Deb Gordon (49/32) in third place. Ball winners for longest drives and nearest the pins went to: Vicki S (2), Glenn C, Gerard R (2), Ken G, Natalie K, Pete H, Robert T and Matt H. The googly ball was awarded to Pete H after his effort to score an eagle 2 on Weepers Drive following a wayward drive which was apparently lucky to stay on the course. The dummy spit was initially awarded to Matt H after his tee shot on 'Up the Creek' ended up in one of the few areas that he had not meticulously manicured around the oval. Larry K was the final recipient after he proceeded to complain as to why he wasn't asked to take the official photo at the presentation when the official photographer was accepting his prize. Robert Thompson (who recently finished in 8th place at an international youth golf competition in New Zealand) provided us with his joke that made 'Perfect Sense' before the Ted Evans Joke regarding the lengths golfers would go to when trying to avoid water holes.

Next month, the competition will be on Sunday 2 February and sponsored by the Whitneys and the Schrodgers. Nine-holers will play the Eastern course (Lambert's and France's) next month. We hope you can join us at the community hall at 12.15pm on Sunday, 2 February for a 12.30pm start. – **Ken Gordon**



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WAMBOIN WEATHER – rainfall and temperature records

(50 years from Cooper Road) by Christine Rieber

January Rainfall Stats

January rainfall to the 26th..... 72.5mm
 2025 total rainfall to 26/1 72.5mm

Average January rainfall..... 61.9mm
 2024 January rainfall..... 113.5mm
 2024 total rainfall to 26/1..... 113.5mm

February Rainfall Stats

2024 February rainfall..... 73.0mm
 Wettest February..... 170.75mm in 2010
 Wettest day..... 54.5mm on 9/2/20
 Driest February 1mm in 1986

Average February rainfall..... 58.9mm
 Average no. rain days in February.... 7.4
 Highest no. rain days..... 18 in 1976
 Lowest no. rain days..... 1 in 1995

February Temperature Stats

2024 Feb. maximum..... 33.1°C
 Hottest February day... 42.8°C on 1/2/20
 (5.8°C higher than the previous high 37°C)
 Average day (max.) temperature.... 26.2°C
 Warmest February 1983
 (Av. max day temp. 29.5°C & night 16.9°C)
 Av. Feb. temp. 19.9°C (day+night comb.)

2024 Feb. minimum..... 10.0°C
 Feb. 24. Av. max 27.9°C & Av. min 13.6°C
 Coldest February day.... 12°C on 10/2/96
 Hottest February night... 25.9°C on 1/1/20
 Coldest Feb. night..... 5°C (3 times) on
 17/2/98, 22/2/17 & 10/2/19
 Average night (min.) temperature.... 13.6°C
 Coldest February 2012
 (Av. min day temp. 21.0°C & night 11.4°C)

December Rainfall Stats

December 2024 rainfall..... 57.25mm
 2024 total rainfall..... 690.75mm

Average December rainfall..... 64.9mm
 49yr Av. to end of December... 704.5mm

2024 Wamboin Weather in review**2024 Rainfall Stats**

Wettest month..... January with 113.5mm
 Driest month..... August with 21.25mm
 Wettest day..... 54.0mm on 5th April

2024 Total rainfall..... 690.75mm
 (15mm below the 49-year average)
 Jan-Jun - 451.25mm & Jul-Dec - 239.5mm
 Number of rain days..... 100
 (49-year average is 106.7 days)

2024 Temperature Stats

Hottest day..... 35.5°C on 12th March
 Hottest night..... 19.9°C on 26th January
 Average day temperature..... 20.9°C
 Number of days above 30°C..... 52
 (49-year average..... 29.3)

2024 was the 4th hottest year
 Coldest day..... 5.8°C on 20th July
 Coldest night..... -5.5°C on 19th June
 Average night temperature..... 7.6°C
 Number of nights below 2°C..... 66
 (49-year average..... 64.3)

New records set in 2024 (temperatures)

Hottest March.... average day (max.) temp. 27.1°C (previous record 1998 with 26.3°C)
 The coldest March day of 20.2°C was the warmest on record (previous record 19°C in 1981, 1985, 2009)
 Hottest August... average day (max.) temp. 15.7°C (previous record 2021 with 14.8°C)
 The coldest August day of 10.9°C was the warmest on record (previous record 10°C in 1982)
 The coldest May day of 12°C was the equal warmest on record with 2023
 The coldest September day of 12°C was the equal warmest on record with 2022
 Equal coldest September night..... -4°C on 15th with 1/9/2012
 The coldest November day of 18°C was the equal warmest on record with 1982, 1997

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What the Heck Chapter 31

When the first houses began to appear in the new subdivision of what was rather pretentiously called the Canberra Country Estate in the early seventies, there were few kilometres of road, no community hall, no fire shed, neither shop nor church. The nearest church was St Peters in Sutton, part of the Parish of St John the Baptist in Reid. In the early days of Wamboin, those that wanted a place to worship became part of the congregation of St Peters, meeting twice a month in Sutton.

In the early eighties, Archdeacon Ian George moved that there should be a third service each month at St Peters. David Robertson, who attended St Peters (and owned the third home built in Wamboin), suggested that instead of the service being held at Sutton, it should be in the new community Hall in Wamboin. On 20 January 1985, sixty-seven people

attended the first service seated on a motley collection of chairs, in the bare hall in Bingley Way. Hymn books, prayer books and other church trappings had to be brought from Sutton. Wamboin was, and still is, a “can do” society. If you needed furnishings, you made it yourself. David Robertson made the forms for seating and later the portable cross and lectern. The combined congregations were known as St Peters Sutton-Wamboin.

It was just over 40 years ago that the event occurred, so a few weeks ago, on Sunday 19 January, a service was held at St Andrews to celebrate the anniversary. The Priest who conducted the 1985 service, Paul Woodhart, was guest preacher (I believe it was a different sermon), several members of the 1985 congregation who are still residents of Wamboin attended, and many past members of the church attended from far flung parts of the country. Whilst a head count did not achieve the same number in the congregation as they did in 1985, the amount of talking and the quantity of food consumed would suggest otherwise. Mark the date of 21 January 2035 in your diary now to attend an even bigger celebration for the fiftieth anniversary. – Alan Rope



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Contact: Meriel Schultz 0422614304 or imsconsulting@bigpond.com

Great Christmas market with lots of stallholders, lots of customers, good music and general Christmas cheer along with champagne (thanks Marita) and mince pies. Thank you everyone for your support of this important community activity! By the time this goes in the Whisper we will also have held our January market.

Stop Press! The Christmas market marked our barista Lou Griffith's 100th market!!

Ten years for ten months of each year, Lou has been making you your monthly Saturday cup of coffee. How time flies. Seems ages since we were forever chasing 3 small boys off the hall roof while Lou was distracted making us that coffee! That's reminded me that it must also have been my 100th market too - although I confess to missing a few while away on holidays over the years. And let's not forget it was Tony Power who started it all in October 2003 and Joan Mason who took over the organising role - for what must have been decades - before us 'newbies' arrived on the scene! Congratulations Lou and please keep those coffees coming! Please do come along to support your local market. And please let others know on your social media pages

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Wamboin/Bywong Fibre Network Cancelled by NSW State Government

By Glenn Archer for WCAG

The NSW Government's decision to cancel the construction of the Fibre network for Wamboin and Bywong represents a betrayal of promises and commitments repeatedly made by our local member Steve Whan and Opticomm. In contrast to the "no expense spared" investments made in Sydney and other cities, it demonstrates that the State Government has little interest in supporting residents and businesses in regional NSW.

Those residents, who received the advice from Opticomm (sent on 20 December) or have read WCAG's subsequent Project Update email (sent to those registered with us on 24 December) will know that the NSW Government has terminated the Community's Fibre network project for residents in Wamboin and Bywong. If you haven't seen WCAG's Project Update, its available on our web site at <https://bit.ly/4h9ZFWK>

Many residents subsequently contacted us and provided their considered feedback on the Government's decision. If you're interested to know how your fellow residents feel about this decision, you can read extracts from some of these on our site at <https://bit.ly/3Eb7ZHm>

The Wamboin, Bywong and Sutton Fibre Project started life as a community initiative. It was strongly supported by the community with many very well attended meetings. It came out of NBN's decision to abandon our communities by only offering them access to its satellite Sky Muster service. Importantly, there are areas of Wamboin that didn't have 4G mobile coverage then and that is still true today. In fact, the progressive shutdown of ADSL services over the last few years means that many residents are worse off today than they were last decade. The recent announcement by the Prime Minister to spend \$3b to "finish the NBN" by replacing residences that still use copper services (ie Fibre to the Node/Curb) will not benefit Wamboin/Bywong. No additional money was announced for Fixed Wireless or Satellite designated areas.

The decision by the former NSW coalition government to fund our Fibre network was driven by a recognised need to build a network that was future proof and, importantly, resilient – especially in the context of a bushfire prone region. We all saw how mobile towers and NBN Fixed wireless towers failed on the south coast five years ago. Up until late last year, Steve Whan, and the responsible Minister Tara Moriarty and her Department, continued to say that they were committed to delivering the project.

The WCAG committee and many residents and local businesses are devastated and angered by the decision to cancel the project. Over the last seven years Committee members have worked together putting thousands of hours into researching, consulting with the community, developing solutions, holding discussions with potential providers, interacting with Government MPs, Ministers and Departmental officers. It has been an enormous community focused effort and notwithstanding this effort the committee members and the interests of the community generally have been dismissed rudely by a one page note to say that Wamboin and Bywong have been "descoped" from the project.

If you've read the WCAG's 24 December note you will know that the Department of Regional NSW failed abysmally to effectively manage our project and that a recent Audit undertaken by the NSW Government Auditor General was scathing about its performance. The Audit noted (among many other negative findings) that the Department:

- is responsible for "deficiencies in project and risk management [that] contributed to delays in the department's implementation of the program."
- And that the Wamboin, Bywong and Sutton project has been delayed beyond both its original planned completion date and its revised completion date.

If the delay led to some increases in costs then this was caused by the Department's incompetence. Why should residents wear the consequences? Rather than acknowledge these obviously embarrassing findings, our local Member, Steve Whan, has been spreading the story that the project had to be cancelled as revised construction costs had ballooned to \$60m. It would appear that this number is a complete fabrication and was apparently inflated and provided by an interested party to give the Government a useful excuse for cancelling the project. Given that the Auditor also found that the Department performed badly in undertaking the tender/procurement process, this outcome probably deserves further independent investigation. The Audit also noted that the Department did not actually choose the lowest cost bid and justified this on the basis of a risk analysis. Well, that analysis has now been demonstrated to be flawed. One question that needs to be asked is, why did the Department not simply require Opticomm to perform to their contracted obligations, as opposed to overpaying them for what they have built and allowing them to gain the commercial benefits from what would appear to be the more profitable community of Sutton township? The justification for doing so is a complete fabrication created solely to shift blame from the incompetence of the Department of Regional NSW in managing the project. This action demonstrates how little regard the Government has for regional communities and the value of the supposed commitments made to them.

Wamboin and Bywong residents live just 15 to 20 minute drive from the nation's capital and are now left with NBN's basic satellite internet and many without even a mobile phone service. And yes, some of us now use Starlink – but that is a significantly more expensive service costing almost \$140 per month plus many hundreds of dollars in hardware costs for the dish and router. It's also a bit of a concern that Starlink is not a sovereign provider and able to change its terms of service (and charges) largely outside the control of Australian regulators. And on that note, one of the key requirements that the community felt essential was that the fibre solution be based on a wholesale model in order to allow residents to choose their RSP, or perhaps more importantly, use their existing RSP so as to allow them to retain existing email addresses and/or hosting arrangements. Critically, this model drives competition and service improvement.

WCAG is now considering where we go from here. We'll get back to you in due course. In the meantime, if you'd like to contact Steve Whan and tell him how you feel about the NSW Government's decision to cancel our project you can email him at monaro@parliament.nsw.gov.au or ring his office on 62994899.

The Wonderful Women of Wamboin

Gail Ritchie Knight

The Wonderful Women of Wamboin meet at 10am on Mondays at the Wamboin Community Hall, Bingley Way Wamboin. We are a disparate group of women from different walks of life with varied interests. But that's what makes us interesting. You are welcome to join us regularly or occasionally whatever is convenient. Bring \$2 to cover hall hire, maybe a craft you are working on if you want to craft whilst you chat. Contact: Gail Ritchie Knight (0416 097 500, whirlwind1@argonite.com.au).

2024 Christmas Decorating Competition

Gail Ritchie Knight

The winners of the 2024 Christmas Decorating Competition were revealed and presented with their prizes during the Wamboin Markets in December last year. The prizes offered by the wonderful Pauline Segeri were sponsored by the Wamboin and Bywong Community Associations. The prizes were superb gift baskets.

And the winners were: **Best entrance: 834 Norton Rd (day and night both great)** **Best letterbox 164 Bingley Way** Hopefully in future years we can have a more vibrant competition where everywhere you drive in Wamboin and Bywong you will see amazing decorations.



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It's Summertime! Keep calm, cool, plan and relax...

Working outside during the day in summer is best avoided if possible. However, the longer daylight savings days do offer some time for pottering about in the evening cool. It's generally too hot to establish new plantings and there are other, more relaxing holiday jobs to do. We can take some rest, focus on managing heat stress and plan for the cooler months to come.

Evening strolls give us the chance to plan for planting in the coming months, when the weather cools in autumn. Think about bare patches of soil where ground covers may grow and cool the soil, retain water, and provide habitat. Do you have exposed areas where the wind rushes through? Perhaps a windbreak would be useful. Exposed paddocks may need some shade, or you may wish to establish refuge for birds, insects, frogs or other wildlife.

Some small jobs can be tackled as part of evening strolls. Most residents will have prepared their bushfire management and survival plans earlier in the year. Take any further opportunities to tidy up the garden, removing dead and dry material, especially around residences and sheds.

Mulching is another job that you may have tackled earlier in the year. While enjoying your property, look around to check plants are well mulched, especially recent plantings. Check that mulch is not washing away. Take time to top it up as needed, maintaining a thick layer to conserve water, cool the soil and encourage soil microbes. Leave some space at the stem to ensure mulch doesn't decay there and cause collar rot.

Watering can also encourage recent plantings through a hot summer. Established, grouped plantings will usually manage the heat. Recent plantings are often more sparse and may not yet have endured a full cycle of seasons in the ground. Younger plants benefit greatly from some supplementary watering through the summer. Watering is best done in the early morning or late in the evening and directly to the soil (or mulch). This will avoid wet foliage which can burn in the heat of the day.

If you have enough water to spare, top up bird baths and other shallow vessels to provide water for wildlife passing through your property.

Weeds suffer in the heat too. Some can be more easily controlled by mechanical means (digging, chipping or slashing) as they struggle in the heat. Others which have germinated and growing after recent spring rain, should be controlled before they set seed. Avoid spraying in the heat of the day as the pores (stomata) on weed leaves close to conserve water and so take in less herbicide.

Some local weed species that are best controlled in summer include the following.

- Scotch Thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*)
 - o spray before flowering in late spring/early summer
 - o remove seedlings mechanically.
- St Johns wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
 - o spray in summer.
- Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*)
 - o remove seedlings and mature plants mechanically in summer.

Blackberry seedlings can be controlled more easily by mechanical or chemical means in summer and as part of a year-round management program coordinated with neighbours.

Avoid spraying serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) plants in summer when they are stressed, as herbicide will be less effective. These can be chipped as part of a lazy walk. If the opportunity arises, summer rain spells may enable tussocks to be pulled out more easily. Dead plants can be composted or burned when the weather cools.

Don't forget to spread a thick layer of clean, weed-free mulch on any bare soil after weeding. Consider your preferred plantings and/or encourage existing, non-invasive, native plants to spread in that location.

Stay cool, relax and enjoy some downtime during summer. - Leanne Hodge, Secretary Gearys Gap/Wamboin Landcare
The Gearys Gap/Wamboin Landcare Group will be holding a plant sale at the Bywong Car Boot Sale, 9-12.00 23 March 2025 at Les Reardon Reserve, 67 Birriwa Road, Bywong.

References for further information:

St Johns Wort control https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/193075/St-Johns-wort.pdf

Thistle control <https://www.yates.com.au/lawn-hub/problem-solver/thistles/>

Horehound control <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/72>

Blackberry control <https://vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/managing-blackberry-herbicides-helpful-tips/>

Serrated tussock control <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Details/123>

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Thunderbolts and lightning, very, very frightening....

It was just a wander around the block. This year blackberries are popping up everywhere, not to mention St John's wort, thistles, serrated tussock and briar rose. I like to get in before these nuisance weeds go to seed and so a regular wander around the block allows me to plan my next attack.

In my perambulations I came across a tree that had broken about halfway up the trunk. Over the years I have seen many trees that have fallen down but they have fallen from the base. This tree had broken at some height above the ground. It was a recent break since the leaves on the broken branch were still in place, dead but still attached. This fall had happened recently methinks.

I was intrigued. A closer inspection and there was a telltale brown mark on the bark all the way down the trunk. The point where the branch had separated also had what looked like a burn mark. This

tree had been struck by lightning!

The fact the tree had been struck was not that remarkable since we have had several thunderstorms in recent weeks. What was remarkable was that I hadn't spotted this broken tree earlier. Trees hit by lightning are a common starting point for bushfires. These trees can smoulder for weeks and then a slight change in wind direction and a fire is off. This time no fire and no burning tree but later in the fire season when everything is so much drier and maybe things would be different.

The lesson for me is after a thunderstorm, particularly one involving close lightning strikes and I will be going for a casual wander to see if any of my trees have been hit. If a tree has been struck then I will be looking for any smouldering which of course can be difficult to detect if the tree is burning from the inside. What to do next would be a judgement call and might require the services of the RFS. My priority is to avoid a burning bush this summer.

I offer this brief story as something to think about as we head into hotter and drier conditions with the potential for more thunderstorms. Enjoy your summer. - **Kevin Rowe**, Resident and Weed Terminator

Clean Up Australia Day, Sunday 2 March 2025

A suggestion from the Wamboin Community Association, Inc.

Clean Up Australia Day (CUA Day) is a great opportunity for all *Whisper* readers to contribute to the amenity of the wonderful localities in which we live.

As the national organisers write, 'We are encouraging everyone to get involved in Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday 2nd March 2025 and help us make this the BIGGEST ever, as we celebrate 35 years of improving and conserving our environment, one piece of litter at a time! It's hard to believe that what was started thirty-five years ago, by Ian Kiernan, AO, an "average Australian" who had a simple idea to make a difference in his own backyard has now become the nation's largest community-based environmental event, held annually on the first Sunday in March.'

For 27 years, the Wamboin Community Association, with the full support of the Wamboin Bushfire Brigade, and of Council, successfully led the cleaning up of Wamboin's road verges. In 2018, QPRC ceased their support, citing safety hazards. This means that cleaning our roadsides cannot be an official CUA Day event.

However, we don't need Council's approval for us to individually clean up any rubbish found along the roadsides in front of our, and our neighbours', blocks. Let's do it!

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📧 For more information or assistance in registering, feel free to contact us via email at wamboinpcsecretary@gmail.com

Looking forward to a fun and horsey filled 2025!!

- by Zara Warren

Many Residents Donated Time and Energy ...

... to bring into 1300+ Wamboin and Bywong Homes this issue of the Wamboin Whisper. Thank you to each of you who delivered Whispers into your neighbours' mailboxes, ran an ad in, or wrote something for this February 2025 issue. It would not exist without each of us working to get another picture of area life to every home.

Deadline for the March issue is 7 pm, Sunday night, February 23. Guidelines that seem to me worth using are:

Written by a resident of a resident of Bywong or Wamboin with name shown so readers can know you are a real person living out here, respectful of the many lifestyles and views here, not printed elsewhere, at least related to living here, and paid for as an ad if it could increase your income. - Ned Noel, volunteer editor on behalf of the Wamboin Community Association, which owns the Whisper, nednoel@optusnet.com.au or whisper@wamboincommunity.asn.au, mob. 0409 997 082.

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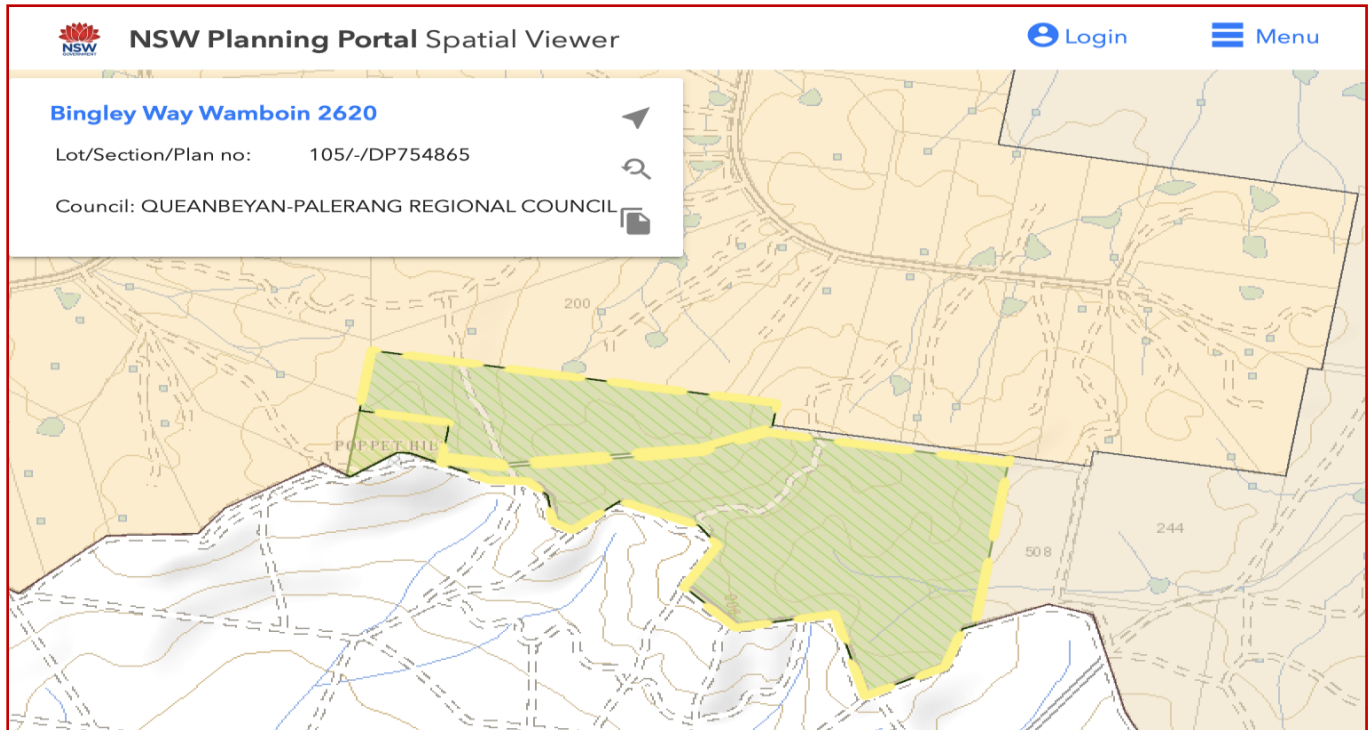
Wamboin Crown Reserve

Peter Komidar

There has long been two schools of thought among locals regarding the patch of remnant forest above Bingley Way. Some people say it's a Crown Reserve others that it's only vacant Crown Land. After some discussions with the relevant NSW Government officials (on the phone and in writing) I can confirm that the forest block is indeed a Crown Reserve.

In fact, the block has been reserved twice! It was first gazetted on 28 August 1939 as Reserve 66205 - a general reserve. However, on 30 June 1950 the Reserve was upgraded as Reserve 73579 for the purpose of 'Soil Conservation'. The manager of the Reserve is the Hon Stephen Kamper, NSW Minister for Lands and Property.

The Reserve covers 145.25 acres and is contiguous with the 10 acre Poppet Hill Trig Reserve. Additionally, there is also the area of Crown Land set aside for a road connecting the existing council road with the Poppet Hill Trig Reserve. (The road was initially designed to provide surveyors with access to Poppet Trig but given the development of GPS technology, it is unlikely to ever be required).



While soil conservation and the prevention of erosion is the primary purpose of the Reserve, it has many other important values. It is the site of a major 1970s CSIRO water monitoring exercise which used (then) state of the art telemetry at a field station situated on private land adjacent to the Reserve. While there has been some recent disturbance of the site, the weir used in the monitoring exercise is still extant. Meanwhile, nearer to Poppet Hill, there is a possible 19th Century mine site - complete with slumped shaft, building remnants and various metal items.

In addition to these cultural heritage values the Reserve hosts a vast plethora of wildlife. As well as kangaroos, echidnas and wombats, the Reserve is home to lyrebirds and cuckoos whose song can be heard in predawn hours, particularly in late winter and early spring. Gang gangs have often been spotted in the Reserve and I was lucky enough to witness a powerful owl on a low branch that had just caught a possum!

Introducing the Friends of Wamboin Crown Reserve

Would you would like to help protect and conserve the Reserve? If so, why not become a founding member of the Friends of Wamboin Crown Reserve. Just email me at pkomidar@gmail.com

A 'Friends of ...' group could pursue a range of actives including:

- Promoting the existence of the Reserve and its objectives to locals and interest groups.
- Doing the occasional working bee pulling weeds and pine saplings (the Fire Brigade already does a fine job eliminating the big pine trees!)
- Obtaining advice from a civil engineer on appropriate soil erosion mitigation and prevention actions.
- Obtaining advice from an environmental scientist on actions to enhance the Reserve's local wildlife.
- Compiling a comprehensive species list using citizen science tools such as iNaturalist and NatureMapr.
- Promoting the cultural heritage values within the Reserve to state and local government officials and interest groups.

These are just a few initial ideas. Let's brainstorm!

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Tales From Possumwood Manar the Wombat – a Remarkable Christmas Present

Manar the wombat was brought to us by Bill from Majors Creek Wombat Refuge late one cold night about 12 years ago. She had a severe head injury, fractured skull with significant concussion, fractured jaw and a couple of loose incisors that needed to be wired for stability. The Vet prognosis was very poor. She would have scored lowly on the modified Glasgow Coma Scale. Manar spent about 18 months being rehabilitated in our loungeroom in a large wooden crate. I was her main carer and syringe fed her a slurry of mixed feed to keep her alive. I knew from previous experience rehabilitating coma cases you need a lot of patience and be thankful for any improvement, however slight. It can be tedious.

Manar was in rehabilitation with us at Possumwood Wildlife for 18 months. We would let her wander around the yard, and she became best friends with a little lamb we had also rescued called Lambie. Manar and Lambie became great friends and would have contests pushing against each other with their heads - much to our concern because of Manar's head injury. We got her a collar with a small flashing red light which we put on her while she was out in the yard exercising and feeding - just in case she wandered off in her brain fog. She was a truly gentle creature.

One day, after 18 months in care, Manar decided it was time to go back to the wild - we did not think she was ready. You always want to protect them, but part of the tough job of being a wildlife rehabilitator is to let go. The last time we saw Manar was in 2012. We kept our eye open for any evidence of new wombat holes on the property but never saw Manar again - until Christmas, and after an absence of 12 years!

One of our wombats whom we considered too small to be released had escaped from his enclosure. We set the wombat trap to try to get him safely back in his enclosure for later release. Instead, to our surprise, we caught a large female wombat with a little joey in her pouch. She made no aggressive noises or lunges at us as we approached. Rosemary thought the captured wombat was Manar as she seemed to recognise my voice and was so affectionate. She had rubbed her nose and injured a nail whilst in the trap, so we brought her to the Possumwood Vet hospital and put her in a bin to rest and treat her injuries. While she was resting, we felt her head and looked for the telltale scar and skull depression - the result of her initial severe head injury. She had recognised us before we recognised her. We spent some time with her in the bin prior to her release back to the wild once more. Her joey was about 400 grams. She was going back out to be free again.

It's so hard to say goodbye a second time to a dear sweet girl after 12 years. But we know she was happy and thriving and that is what we want for her and all the wildlife being treated and recovering at Possumwood.

Adult wildlife with severe injuries can be saved and rehabilitated. It might take one or two years, not just a few weeks, to rehabilitate a wild animal but wildlife rehabilitated after severe injuries can live long happy lives back in the wild. Animals do not forget those who have given them refuge, care, respect and heaps of love.

-Prof Steve Garlick, Owner and manager Possumwood Wildlife Veterinary Hospital charity. 70 Joe Rocks Road



QPRC Mobile Library

The QPRC Mobile Library bus will be at the Wamboin Hall from 10.30-11.30am on Thursday 6 and 20 February 2025, and then fortnightly. The Mobile Library provides a wonderful opportunity to borrow books, CDs, audio books etc and the Wamboin community really needs to support this great service. After you have visited the library drop into the Social Group and have a cuppa.

Wamboin Thursday Social Group

The group operates every Thursday morning from 10 – 12 noon at the Wamboin Hall, Bingley Way. If you have a free Thursday morning why don't you pop in for a tea/coffee, chat or a game or scrabble, rummykub, Mexican trains or cards. The group is very welcoming to new comers and provides a wonderful chance to meet up with some local residents. We look forward to seeing you. The picture at left is from our Christmas lunch.

-Both items above prepared by Narelle Pumphrey



Nature Notes – January 2025

Jo Walker

Although we've been getting a lot of hot days, often with temperatures in the thirties, there has been enough rain to keep the countryside quite green. My dam is full but has just ceased overflowing. I saw five Long-necked Turtles there recently, including a young one with a shell about half the size of an adult's. The little pond below the dam has plenty of water in it, and it's very muddy signifying the large Yabby is still in residence.

Not a lot of plants are in flower at present – so now is the time of year to appreciate all the different shades of green in the foliage. The brownish-green of the eucalypts act as a backdrop to the contrasting bright green of the Cherry Ballart trees (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*), the bluish-green of the Silver Wattles (*Acacia dealbata*) and many other subtle shades.

There are still some patches of white, some quite extensive, where the Cauliflower Bushes (*Cassinia longifolia*) stretch up the hillsides. And the late-flowering Hickory Wattle (*Acacia implexa*) is just beginning to put on a show of cream flowers.

A few *Solanum cinereum* plants began growing here a year or two ago – probably brought in by fruit-eating birds. They grow to about 40 cm tall and have flat purple flowers with bright yellow stamens. And they have long spines on the stems and large leaves. One of the much taller *Solanum linearifolium* (Mountain Kangaroo Apple) also grows here.

And, closer to the ground, the little Narrow-leaved New Holland Daisies (*Vittadinia muelleri*) are still bearing a few tiny blue flowers as well as white fluffy seed-heads.

A few weeks ago the air was humming with the sound of lots of Cicadas. They seem to have fallen silent now, but the recent rain has replaced that sound with the loud song of the Mole Crickets. While on the subject of insects, there were quite a few Fiddler Beetles (*Eupoecila australasiae*) around for a week or so in December feeding on the flowers of Kunzeas and Bottlebrush bushes. These are large, shiny, dark brown beetles with yellow marking resembling the outline of a violin.

I've only seen one snake this summer, a large Red-bellied Black Snake down by the dam which quickly slithered away. A Cunninghams Skink took up residence in the garage earlier but seems to have been replaced now by a Shingleback Lizard.

The Pied Currawongs seem to have moved off for summer, but a flock of fifteen White-winged Choughs has moved in to dig up the garden and have a few disputes with the Magpies. Red Wattle-birds have moved in to feed on the nectar of the Grevillea flowers, and there were a few Noisy Friar Birds competing with them recently.

Some of the Kangaroos have joeys at foot, but some are still carrying pouch joeys. Watching the 'roos on the hillside at dusk is such a peaceful way to end the day in Wamboin.

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How the Whisper Gets Into Your Mailbox Each Month

Without the month by month donation of time by the residents listed below, it would be impossible for Wamboin, Bywong and other residents in the newsletter's catchment area to have The Whisper. Please remember all residents listed below, as they do what they do in order to make their communities a little bit friendlier and more sociable. Thank you to Barbara Wilkins and Darrin Lincoln for taking on the challenging 11 deliveries on Macs Reef's big steep hill.

Without the businesses that pay to advertise in The Whisper we could not pay for printed copies. Finally, each article, invitation and notice you read in each Whisper is only there because you or others in the community took the time to write it.

174: CO-ORDINATED BY CHRISTINE REIBER: phone 6238 3518

Fay Kelly	Norton West Area from Cmpbl Pl	20	Christine Rieber	Cooper Rd	27
Dave Power	Fernloff Rd	34	Vicki Still	Canning Cl	15
Andrea Sadow	Poppet Rd	32	Alan Rope	Sutton Rd	47

181: CO-ORDINATED BY KATHY HANDEL: ph 6238 3596 khandel@bigpond.net.au

Joan Mason	Bingley Way	44	Margaret Hekeimin	Merino Vale Dr	19
Sue Ward	Norton Rd (Bingley to Weeroona)	32	Anne Gardner	Weeroona Dr (Norton to Majors)	32
Kathy Handel	Norton(Weero2Hilltop+Wimdra)	25	Phil Leeson&C Fogarty	Norton Rd (Campbell to Bingley)	27

235: CO-ORDINATED BY KERRIE FISHER: ph 6238 3489

Lesley Page	Valley View Ln	4	Deb Gordon	Yalana East	45
Colleen Foster	BdoreRd BtwnJoRocks&NortnRd	25	Dominica Lorimer	Norton Rd – North End	44
Cassie Fisher	Clare Ln	12	Lyle Montesin	The Forest Rd area incl Joe Rcks	65
Jules Clancey	Norton Rd #1033-#1240	37			

204: CO-ORDINATED BY GARETH JONES Ph: 6238 1988 givrjones@bigpond.com

Sophie Davis	Weeroona (254 – 400)	18	Susie & Brad Edwards	Weeroona (417-512)	17
James Houlcroft	Macs Reef Rd (DenleyToGumFlt)	7	Maria Taylor	Birriwa Rd & Gum Flat Lane	19
Nora Stewart	Rovere Ln	7	Justin Jarvis Smith	Macs Reef Birriwa to Harriott	14
Megan Wallace	Harriott Rd	28	Barbera.Wilkins	MacsReef 670,622,618,568,566	5
Sandra Favre	Newington Rd	23	Darrin Lincoln	MacsReef 538,565,587,623,625,649	6
Chrystal Earle	Snowgum Road	26	Carol&Clive Boughton	Macs Reef (BankersTo FedHwy)	34

170: CO-ORDINATED BY IAN COILLET ph 0402 027 452 lodestar@ozemail.com.au

Simon Lewis	Federal HwSvcRd	24	Louise Baldwin	Wattle Flat Rd	11
Lyn Parkinson	Bidges/Hickey/OldGoldMines	53	Fire Brigade	Headquarters on Bingley Way	1
Chris & Kate M	Sutton Park Estate	55	Russell Ball	Macs Reef – Denley Dr to B'doreRd	26

150: CO-ORDINATED BY DAVID FEATHERSTONE ph 6236 9722 bushranger_au@hotmail.com

Chris Fowler	Millynn Rd	22	David Featherston	B'doreRd SmHill to&nclldgCrkBRd	31
Sue Aunella	Brooks Rd	24	David & Connie Jansen	Wyoming Road	20
Kerrie Gougeon	B'dore Rd (CreekB to Fed Hwy)	33	Peter Sharp	Doust Road	20

250 CO-ORDINATED BY NED NOEL ph 0409-997-082 email nednoel@optusnet.com.au

Robyn Elsom	Denley Dr (Sth End to 429)	15	JonesFmly+JulieJohnsn	Denley 191 to 414	26
Tony Bond	HoganDr/OranaDr/Yuranga Dr	52	Mary & Paulo Beneforti	Dnly Dr frm MacsReef to Birchmans	12
Janey & Paul Pedersen	BirchmansFrmDenleyUp2SaraRf	16	Helen Longdon	SarahReef&BrichmansFrmSarah2End	11
Murray Goodridge	B'dore Rd (McsRf to&nclSmrhl)	40	Diana Griffin	Majors Close	19
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Councillor's Report

Hello there and thanks for reading. I know that wishing anyone a happy new year this late into the year may infringe social norms, if not some obscure law, though having not had the chance to catch up with everyone since the start of 2025, let me take this opportunity to say that I hope your January was enjoyable, safe and restful.

For me, the last month was busy with events, meetings, emails, calls, researching issues, developing some policy ideas and hosting mobile offices across the region. I suspect the tempo is a sign of things to come for the year ahead so make sure to keep up with me on Facebook. I also post things like information and surveys relevant to our region and always appreciate your input.

I'd first like to acknowledge the St Andrew's community on their 40 year anniversary which we celebrated recently at a service. Some of the originals were there along with Reverend Paul Woodhart who made a guest appearance – a far cry from sitting on hay bales in the shed when it all began. Congratulations to Reverend Royce Thompson and to all of those involved with the church over the years.

On fantastic local events, I was disappointed to have missed the Kowen Trail Run but heard it was a great turn out! The run unfortunately came just a day or so after my birthday and I discovered late that my family had planned various things which took up parts of my weekend calendar. The winter run is already in the diary though and with birthdays thankfully only coming once a year, I'll be there!

Something I'm particularly proud of is the establishment of a Seniors Advisory Committee of Council. In essence, I believe we should have an advisory committee of seniors from across our region to help guide Council strategy and policy. I sought to establish this committee soon after being first elected and fought for it since that time and I'm pleased to report that with much community support it has now passed Council and the terms of reference are presently being developed. Stay tuned for more details!

Would you like an opportunity to help shape our region by joining a Council committee? Wamboinians are a very active group and have great connections and commitment to our institutions, our natural environment and to our community so being involved on an Advisory Committee may interest you. Please visit the QPRC website, my Facebook page or get in touch with me for more details about the types of committees seeking members, what you might be asked to advise on and what commitment we're looking for.

Talking of getting involved, on Australia Day the Bungendore Show Committee was awarded Event of the Year and for those who attended the show you'll understand why – it was fantastic but here's the thing... The Committee needs volunteers to make it happen again this year. They're looking for people to fill a range of roles and the deadline is 8 March so please think about helping out to make it the best show yet.

Finally, I've previously used my column in the Whisper to try to address issues which Council has responsibility for so if you think of anything that the community may benefit from some more information about then please get in touch and I'll do my best to incorporate the issue in to a future edition.

Thanks again for reading and as always, please reach out if I can be of any assistance. Cheers, -- Cr. Ross MacDonald



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2025 Wheels of Wamboin - 17 May 2025

The 2025 edition of the wheels of Wamboin is scheduled for 17 May 2025 (This is a move from the April date due to Easter falling on the third Saturday in April).

We apologise for the later than usual notice but we are still sorting some insurances out due to a change in policy. Like everything else our insurance is going up as we are trying to cover this with a few extra sponsors which I will announce next month. As everyone knows the whole concept of Wheels of Wamboin is to give 100% of donations to charity so I am loath to have the monies go to an insurance company but I guess this is the new world. So, in our 11th year we will celebrate a number of important motoring anniversaries, and some might raise some fond memories.

Jaguar turns 90 years old from it's founding in 1922 as the Swallow Sidecar Company to SS cars and then to Jaguar in 1945 after WW11 for obvious reasons. 70 years ago, the Citroen DS debuted at the Paris motor show with futuristic styling and hydropneumatic suspension (still to be understood by many). It is still instantly recognised as the signature Citroen. The Volkswagen Type 2 maybe better known as the Kombi is 75, the sweet Alfa Romeo GTA is 60 years old and the GT350 Mustang is 60 years young. The Jaguar XJS turns 50 and the once ugly duckling is starting to become a swan with collectors, the ground breaking BMW 3 series was born in 1975 and the Volkswagen Polo was launched in 1975 as well.

The lovable MX5 is still goodlooking without makeup at 35 years old and the the stunning F50 Ferrari poster pin up car is now 30 years old. The poor old PT Cruiser is 25 years old. The current Audi nameplate celebrates 60 years. Before that Auto Union GmbH produced DKW automobiles. In 1965 they were rebranded as Audi. In 1899, August Horch, a German engineer,

started a motor company in Cologne called A. Horch & Cie. Horch in German means to hear or listen and in Latin is translated as Audi. Horch was unable to use his own name as the brand name, so he used "Audi". The four rings in the logo represent four merged automakers Audi, Horch, DKW and Wanderer. Audi's catch cry is 'Vorsprung durch Technik', which is translated as 'Progress through Technology'. In 1965 the Audi nameplate was reborn.

Hopefully we will see all these marques and more at the Wheels of Wamboin Saturday 17 May 2025 – **Peter Evans**

WHEELS OF WAMBOIN



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The Village of Bywong/ Bywong Town/ Bywong Reefs, 1860s onwards

Prologue: Peter Komidar's article in the Dec. 2024-Jan. 2025 *Whisper*, p. 9, presented intriguing evidence that Peter suggests points to colonial-era gold mining atop Poppet Hill. He goes on to suggest that, by extension, the hill was named after a gold mine's poppet-head there. Peter's article has raised interest in the community about the history of gold mining in the broader area. You may enjoy this 1979 newspaper article on the topic.

Staking a claim for Bywong

By Lyn Drummond

Source: *Canberra Times*, 28 Oct 1979, p. 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article110609257>.

If you ignore the car wrecks and split bags of rubbish dumped in the deep mine shafts by the uncaring and sit under a wattle beside Bywong's stone well it is easy to imagine the gold rush of 1895, when miners flocked there by dray or on foot.

There are many timber-lined shafts, remains of buildings where the miners lived, mining implements like ore buckets, the remains of a crushing plant, a shaft superstructure with a rig, an open-cut area and a dam.

Now Yarrowlumla Shire Council and members of the Bungendore Historical Society want to preserve as much of the site as possible.

Bywong is 16 kilometres from Bungendore by the Gundaroo Road, and has an area of about 23 hectares.

The historical society has prepared a submission to the council about the site. The society wants to preserve the buildings, the remains of shafts and the well, and says there is nothing else like them around Canberra. It wants the shafts preserved by fencing or grids, so they can be viewed. The council wants the site turned into a public recreation area.

Bywong is Crown Land, administered by the NSW Department of Lands. The shire council wants to take over control of the area.

A spokesman for the Soil Conservation Service of NSW in Queanbeyan said on Thursday that he had been instructed by the Department of Mineral Resources and Development to re-claim the Bywong site, report on soil erosion in the area, fill up the shafts and grass the site. 'We will not touch the stone well and two graves there', he said. There was evidence of erosion, and the shafts were a hazard to children.

A spokesman for the Soil Conservation Service of NSW in Queanbeyan said on Thursday agreed (*sic*) to meet members of the historical society and a soil-conservation representative on the site to discuss which areas should be preserved.

The meeting was arranged for next Thursday.

The historical society's president, Mrs Elizabeth McGahey, has said, 'There is no soilerosion (*sic*) there, and we would not like to see all the shafts filled. Some of the better shafts should be preserved. We are willing to help clear up all the rubbish out there'.

The principal of Sutton Primary School, Mr Chris Bayliss, would like to see it preserved like Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, where visitors can pan for gold and see what a goldmining town looked like last century.

He has been interested in the Bywong site since becoming the school principal 16 years ago, and has begun an open-air museum at the school with some of the machines used at the 1895 mine, including the steam engine used to drive the battery to extract the gold and a crusher owned by one of the miners, the late Mr Arthur Shepherd.

According to the Bungendore Historical Society's submission to the council, the mining dates back to the 1860s, when gold was discovered at Brooks Creek and Macs Reef. The township of Newington was established in the vicinity of the Bywong field.

In April, 1894, the Bywong Goldmining Syndicate began operations. Several shafts were sunk, the most important belonging to Alexander Johnston. A crushing plant known as the Huntingdon Mill was set up, and more than 500 tons of ore was processed in a little over two years, yielding gold valued at 1,070 pounds.

The owner of the old Bywong sheep station, P. J. B. Donnelly, often helped prospecting parties with food and cash while giving them freedom to work on his land, according to Errol Lea Scarlett's book about the history of Gundaroo.

Alexander Johnston, who had contracted to build the Queanbeyan railway line, afterwards turned his interest to mining. He had capital to invest, and installed a crushing machine that was managed by Joe Bedford.

James Cartwright, Joseph Sharp and George Robbins took up a claim between Johnston's battery and Mac's Reef, where Tom Cartwright was already working.

Reports of their success attracted unemployed or hard-pressed labourers, one of whom, Thomas Alchin, came from Jerrawa with his wife and children in 1894. Tom Alchin quickly fell in with J. F. Lowe, the Gundaroo schoolteacher, and in July, 1894, they formed a syndicate which included Lowe and his brothers Alan and Charles, and their stepfather, Hector Murray Gordon.

Two months later Alchin hit upon a reef. It returned more than 51 ounces from four tons from a depth of 40 feet.

News of Lowe and Alchin's success began the rush. Forty men were on the field in November, 1894, 250 the following March, and a peak of about 300 in mid-1895.

The area first worked centred on the free selection of James Henry Millyn, who quickly announced plans for subdivision of his land into 50- or 60-acre allotments to be a township.

The crude concentration of huts and tents was recognised officially in December, 1895, when Surveyor Goodrich laid out a village of Bywong (commonly called Bywong Reefs) with four streets—Burbong, Bungendore, Burra and Gundaroo. It was too late, in reality, to catch the passing wave of population. Bywong had reached its zenith in two slab buildings bearing the inscription 'General Store', a brown-and-white tent with "cheap grocer" roughly traced on it, half a score of windlasses studding the hilltop, one or two slab huts and numerous tents.

Two baker and two butchers did a passing trade, and Bill Sherd planned a public house to be known as the Bywong Hotel, but it died quickly while still in the planning stage.

The keeper of the general store, Henry Hyles, commonly known as "Daddy", stayed on until his death in 1904. He was popular most of all for his stocks of boiled sweets. He continued the post office.

John L. Gunnell was the first teacher at the Bywong School. When after only three weeks the average attendance dropped below 20, he said sickness was prevalent and most parents had not known that the school was open.

The school continued for several years, but Gunnell's successor, in 1901, J. W. Vidler, found no signs of the township once envisaged. Only three families, the Dinters, Earnshaws and Shepherds, were left. The school closed in 1909.

Many of the mines were called by fanciful names like Victory and The Mystery. The best known were The Little Wonder and The Lone Hand, both at the Mac's Reef end of the field.

The Little Wonder, after yielding results for its owners, Henry Pringle and James Ronaldson, petered out early in 1896 through lack of water in a drought. The Lone Hand, undertaken by James R. Whyte, yielded an average of one ounce of gold to the ton.

The Lowe and Alchin Central Gold Mining and Quartz Milling Co was floated in July, 1896. Proposing a capital of 4,000 pounds in shares of two pounds, the company did not attain even a thousand shares. Five calls on shareholders in seven months of operations reduced confidence in the company to nil. The dam burst, and in a year the company was dead and the workings reverted to Alchin's fossicking. Pickings were won from time to time. As late as 1957 42 ounces of gold was taken from the old mine.

The Bywong Well was built in 1896 but was of little use in overcoming the lack of water.

One of the miners wrote at the end of 1895, 'If these were facts instead of fancies there would soon be an oasis around the well and the children's faces and frocks would be like cherries and snowdrops and the sound of the washing board would be heard in the land, the gentle shepherds would have clean moles and a bath on New Year's Day ...'.

Arthur Shepherd was one of the last miners at Bywong. He mined the area for more than 60 years until his death in 1964, eking out a living close to where the Federal Highway began to speed travellers to Canberra across the graveyard of so many golden dreams.

Arthur Shepherd's brother, Mr Aubrey Shepherd, now 80 and living in Queanbeyan, remembers Lowe and Alchin.

'I was the youngest of a family of 10 and we grew up at Bywong', Mr Shepherd recalled. 'I went to the school there for about eight months and left when I was eight to work on a property at Bungendore.'

'I remember there was a mill there driven by wind. There was 27 ounces of gold to the ton of rock at one time. They were digging holes and finding quartz hanging from the roof of the shaft, held together by gold.'

'There were about 200 people living in Bywong in bark and slab cottages. Don and Grace Millyn lived in a property nearby (the Bywong site is off Millyn Road), and I remember the Earnshaws, the Kershaws and an old German who everyone called Mr Gunther.'

Three of Arthur Shepherd's sons own a cardealer's business at Fyshwick. One of them, Mr Paul Shepherd, said of his father, 'He had Long Corner mine on the Millyn property, and he mined quite a lot of gold from that. He was 77 when he died and he had mined Bywong most of his life. He didn't make a fortune out of it. We had an 870-acre property out there. But I remember him finding nuggets at Long Corner. He would mine the ore out of the ground using the crushers ...'.

Mrs Grace Millyn, now 97 and a patient at Jindalee Nursing Home, Narrabundah, remembers the day Arthur Shepherd found nuggets on her property. So does her daughter, Mrs May Monahan. Her wedding ring was made from some of the gold. 'I had just announced my engagement', Mrs Monahan said. 'Arthur Shepherd promised me some of the gold would be used to make my wedding ring'.

Mrs Millyn's maiden name was Schofield. She went to Bywong School, later married Don Millyn and settled on a property near the mine. 'There were many people living there once, then the depression came and they all drifted away', she said. 'We never worked the mine but I know plenty of people found gold around there.'

Notes (by David McDonald)

1. In Drummond's article, the name Millynn is mis-spelled throughout.
2. The Bywong Town site is at 35 Bywong Town Road, Bywong, the northern end of this short road. It is private property. The name 'Bywong Town Road' was gazetted in 1998. Perhaps this is when the road was constructed?
3. The official name 'Village of Bywong' was given by the surveyor, JF (John Fowell) Camden Goodridge in 1895. (Goodridge is frequently mis-spelled as Goodrich.) The name was discontinued, *vide* Government Gazette of NSW, 30 March 1979, p. 1532. The village site is listed as a heritage item on the QPRC Heritage Register. Goodridge's plan of the village is available online at https://www.wamboincommunity.asn.au/localhistory/content/support/parishmaps/Village_of_Bywong_Plan_Dec_1895.pdf. Source: NSW Land Registry Services, Historical Land Records Viewer, 'Town of Bywong', surveyor's plan December 1895, <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>.
4. Sadly, the 1979 efforts by the Yarrowlumla Shire Council and the Bungendore Historical Society to have the village site made into a reserve, to be protected for its heritage values (as reported above by Drummond) were unsuccessful. Aspects of the village, and its mining history, had been restored by the late 1980s, and visitors, especially school tour groups, were welcomed by the owners and manager. A 1987 *Canberra Times* notice read 'Bywong Town: Bungendore road off Federal Highway, 28km from Canberra. Old mining village restored, 10am-4pm weekends, school and public holidays; group tours by appointment.' The block was sold to a new owner in 2011, and again in 2021. The property remains in private hands.

