

PITCHFORK

Pappinbarra Valley Monthly News

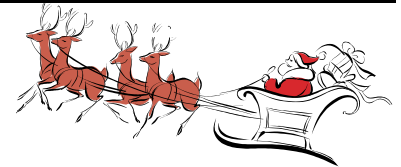
Pappinbarra Progress Association

December/January issue

Valley Happenings

PPA welcomes new members Avis Williams, Suzanne Leigh, Harold Stokes and Alicia Gestal. Thanks to all the folk who have renewed their membership. Do join PPA if you haven't already - the more members the merrier and the better we are placed to access grant funds. Pay at First Friday or complete the form on P8.

Christmas at the Hall! December 6 First Friday will be a special Christmas Party at the hall from 6pm. Santa will arrive after 7:30pm. All welcome! (Bring a small present for your child, wrapped and labelled.) There will be the usual barbecue offerings including vegetarian and gluten-free options. Members' draw, voucher raffle, calendars to buy, and tickets on sale for a big RFS raffle as well.



Calendars - our beautiful, locally produced Pappinbarra Valley calendar will be on sale at First Friday for \$15. Great for Christmas presents! Five for \$60. Thanks to all who contributed photos, to our advertisers, and to Sharada Boyce and Angela Frost for production and layout.

November First Friday, a fundraiser for the Hollisdale RFS, saw a terrific rock up. Jenny Warburton's number came up for the Members' Draw, but she wasn't there so it jackpots to \$20 for December. Jean and George Hegarty won the RFS meat voucher raffle, donated by Lewis' Meats.

Pitchfork Choir will recommence in February 2014 at 10 am on the third Saturday.

All Saints' Church

All welcome for the Christmas service at 2 pm Sunday 22 December and/or the Christmas arvo tea afterwards. Bring a plate of nibbles or goodies to share. Our intrepid priest, Judy Taylor, would love to see again all those who rocked up to the protest meeting a while back! Since the fourth Sunday in January is Australia Day there will be no church service that month.



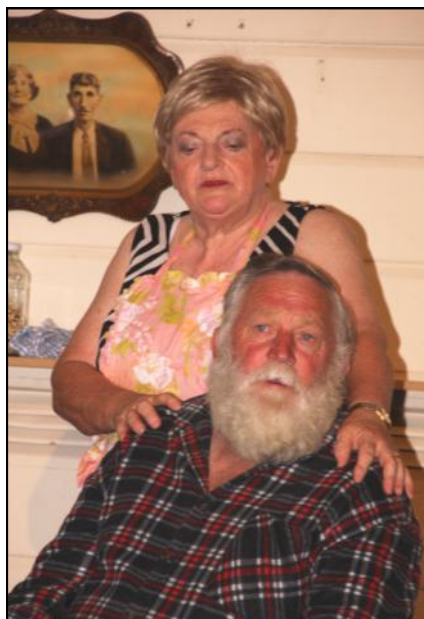
Anyone for tennis?

A new season of the local night competition will start at the Recreation Grounds, Upper Pappinbarra at the end of February and go to April. Cost \$5 per night. Contact Emma Frost 65 876 103

Bushed has been and gone and went; all involved agreed it was a great experience. See report and review below.

Bushed - but not lost

George Hegarty's theatrical confection presented by the Pappinbarra Progress Association with an enthusiastic and engaging local cast may have been called *Bushed* - but it was in no way lost, with its celebration of life in the bush. In the great tradition of a rambling yarn, familiar characters and situations seemed to enter the story as if they had stepped from life onto the stage of the Hollisdale Hall only to get a good-natured ribbing. Scenes that were set in a Rural Fire Shed - and there is one just next to the Hall - or set at a local barbeque - and again such a BBQ is one of the monthly highlights of the Hall in real life - entertainingly brought the mirror up to the life of the audience. Old-time locals Mike and Stella, played with great presence by Peter Wall and Mary Walker, seemed easily shocked by some of the extravagance of the latest new arrivals in the valley, but were actually more accepting than



their son Greg, played by Todd Barnes, who was more stuck in his ways or stuck in his father's ways than even his dad! Todd, himself a new-comer to the community, brought great good humour to this character's set attitudes and stock responses. Mike and Stella had a daughter, too, Rachel, played by Christine Nolan, at university and full of promise. I think that goes for both the character and the actor in this case! A highlight of the show was a sweet and powerful duet, the "Settlers' Song," written by Elly Franchimont and sung beautifully by Peter Wall and Mary Walker. It was an affirmation of the strength binding the characters and underpinning their lives. The PPA received a grant from NSW Country Arts Support Program for Elly to write music and run music workshops. The songs from characters and a committed chorus were a strong element of the show.

Continued page 2.

Bushed - but not lost...continued from page 1

John Uncle played Stan, an old-timer and a source of much mischief and fun. He pontificated and postured, ranted and carried on to the amusement or consternation of the other characters. Possibly the bane of their lives, in the end he was a powerful character integral to the wellbeing of all. Peter Allison played a newbie farmer, Alan, retired from accountancy and Jennie Lea his wife, Eva: they suddenly found their 'successful' daughter from the city, Sophie (Rachel Palmer), was back with them for an 'extended' stay; but how these characters negotiated the issues and events of the district - balancing traditional views and new attitudes - made up the core of the action in *Bushed*.



The arrival of the exotic masseuse April and her partner Jingles caused quite a stir. They had costumes that were tie-dyed, bling-drenched, low-cut and body-hugging; Jingles was tattooed and pierced too. Played in style by Michelé Malseed and Trevor Smith, they tested all the locals: is

there a place for therapeutic massage? But what about Tantric Yoga! In the end it was Stan's long-standing back problem that put this to the comic test.

Perhaps this play should have a disclaimer that reads (a little differently to the familiar one): *any lack of resemblance to real people, living or dead, is purely accidental* for they (we) are all here in an assortment of characters and situations that came close to the mark: dreamy greenies and an old time cow-cocky not too particular about snigging a few logs beyond the letter of the law; 'old-timers' and 'blow-ins' and their kids with studies underway at distant unis or rebounding from relationship bust-ups. It is us. The different generations, the variety of career and life experience, the diversity of views on living on the land; but united by the place. There was an impact on all these characters when a bush fire threatened the community: prescient, as on the nights and afternoon of the performances smoke from the fires to the north was very apparent in the valley. What united the characters in the play was their need to take care of each other and help each other out.

The final chorus, "Beautiful Tallowood Valley" was sung with



gusto by all, and became the anthem of the show. The play is a triumph for a small community that has found a big heart.

"Bushed!" written and directed by George Hegarty; music and musical direction by Elly Franchimont; staged at Hollisdale Hall, 1, 2 and 3 November 2013.

Review by Adrian Guthrie



Photos by Jan Childs

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Meet the Neighbours - Jenny and Peter Wall

Peter grew up in Como, Jenny in Jannali. The Sutherland church held a social evening for young folk; the boys had to go in drag while the girls were each given a ticket in the lucky door prize. Jenny won first prize - the ugliest boy in drag. It was Peter, who wore his grandmother's dress with a pipe, hat and gumboots! Jenny likes to say "I won him in a raffle in 1963".

An apprentice with MIMS Cable and Electrical, Peter also trained at Ultimo Tech as a fitter and a mechanic, and did dairy and pig husbandry at Hawkesbury. He tells of doing tech 'on the train'. The teachers were on the train for a week; it spent a day at Wauchope, a day at Kempsey and so on. He first came to Wauchope to install a parquet mill for Thatcher & Oberg in Wade Street in 1962. Later he worked in SA, following industrial construction sites for APM, Chrysler and Softwood Holdings. He 'wired up the first pineboard plant at Mt Gambier'. The plant - and the instructions - were from Germany. Peter managed to work out the schematics because he had fixed up generators on German boats for Warburton & Franki - Kent Street pump manufacturers.

Peter and Jenny married in 1966 and returned to Sydney for Julieanne's birth. In 1967, they moved to 250 acres with a house on a slab near the Pappinbarra River on the Left Arm ('Mulligan's'). Anthony was born in Wauchope Hospital and christened at the old Ellengrove Schoolroom, where the priest used to come to say mass. 1968 saw the 'hugest flood ever' along the Pappinbarra; electrical work dried up, so rather than driving as far as Taree to find work, Peter reluctantly took his family back to Sydney. They had just 68 cents in the bank, but somehow managed to get a loan from Custom Credit to buy a house in Heathcote. Peter had three jobs seven days a week for quite some time, (survived on two hours' sleep a night for three months), then went all around the state as an electrical contractor, so it was 'twelve years of hard work for us'. Their third baby, Angela, was born in Sydney. Over Easter 1969, the home on the Left Arm was destroyed in a fire, together with all their possessions; they had to sell the land. Six months later, they had paid off the loan!

At Pappinbarra, Jenny and Peter had been great friends with Jack and Mavis Flanagan of *Riversleigh* (the old Wallis home) and 'holidayed with them every now and then'. Finally, when Peter decided to sell the business and 'go bush again', Jenny said, "Just tell me when and I'll go." Hearing that Peter had his eye on a place 'at the back of Bourke', she did stipulate: "from Grafton to Bega and East of the Great Divide"! Out of the blue, a message

came from the Flanagans: "We're not too well and are moving to town; do you want first offer?" So Pappinbarra saw Jenny and Peter and the three kids return to *Riversleigh* in 1980.

Over time, in Sydney and Pappinbarra, the Walls took 32 mentally and sexually abused kids into temporary foster care - 'ones no-one else would take'. Many times, it was the young



Walls who 'got through to them'. Twin girls came, one of whom was mute; it wasn't till a boisterous game in the hayshed on a rainy day that she started to talk. Jenny was also involved in promoting awareness of health issues among women in the bush, holding many a meeting at Hollisdale Hall. I know that at least two locals owed their diagnosis and survival of breast cancer to those meetings. She and Peter played leading roles in the Bushfire Brigade, the Progress Association and Landcare, while

the children went to school at Beechwood, Wauchope High, played sport and were in the town band.

Some fifteen years ago, Jenny and Peter swapped houses with Anthony and his wife Jenny, leaving the younger generation to live at Pappinbarra and running the Timber Corner and nursery business from the premises on Beechwood Road. Peter pioneered tomato and cucumber growing there and, ever generous with his knowledge and expertise, was an advisor to Ricardos when they were setting up.

Peter served on many advisory committees (too many to list!) at local, state and federal levels under both Labour and Liberal Governments. I met him on the Catchment Management Committee when I came to Pappinbarra 15 years ago; my sister, a community liaison officer with the EPA knew him already...

Jenny and Peter have ten grandchildren and one great-granddaughter; family is very important in their lives. Talking to them for this article, I wasn't at all surprised that illness didn't rate a mention, though I know Jenny has had only one functioning kidney for many years and Peter has survived misadventures that would have left a lesser man incapacitated. Jenny has been on the committee of the Port Macquarie Parkinson's Support Group for several years, helping raise money for research and for a local Neurologist and Parkinson's Nurse. In the group's latest newsletter, they reported that 'due to increasingly poor health, she has been forced to step back, but has been indefatigable'.

A few last words from Peter: "The community in the Valley has always been great - so diverse but we pull together when needed. The river seems to flow through us all."

JH

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The Frugal Forest

Remember the Salvage Spider, a giant realistic Orb Spider constructed from old soft toys that loomed over the Glasshouse foyer earlier this year? One Off Makery's new project, **The Frugal Forest**, is even bigger and more preposterous and was launched recently at the Artists' Market in the Vines. The idea is to call on the skills and knowledge of artists, musicians, scientists, community, business and industry to build an intricately detailed forest entirely from salvage. Why? Well, in the forest, nothing is wasted; today's decay is food for tomorrow's new growth. But we humans produce vast amounts of waste and only a fraction of it gets recycled into anything useful; the rest remains, so far, an intractable problem. If we had the skills and the mindset to use less and to treat all our waste as a resource for something new, things could be very different.



One Off Makery, based in Pappinbarra, has some funding from Midwaste to run workshops up and down the Mid North Coast. Closer to home, we'll also be having regular workshops, collecting waste materials from local businesses, and taking up residence in the Glasshouse Arts Lab for two weeks in March. The Forest will finally premiere at the Glasshouse some time in late 2015. Meanwhile, there are all sorts of ways you can get involved: donate your precious junk, come to a workshop, barrack silently or contribute ideas. To learn more or to put in your two cents' worth, you can check out www.frugalforest.oneoffmakery.net.au, where you can also subscribe to the monthly newsletter and hear about upcoming events.

At the moment we're collecting packing strap, x-rays, green bags, old photos, PVC conduit, paper coffee cups, fishing rods and odd socks. The list is growing as we design more plants so if you have a material available in large quantities (we need to have enough to make a series) then let me know and I could try to design something to suit.

Bryony Anderson

Conservation Corner

In late October the Pappinbarra Landholders' Conservation Group heard that it had been successful in a bid for funding support from the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority. The grant provides almost \$150,000 to cover a variety of on-ground works on members' properties including fencing of riparian and other wetland communities, weed management and other habitat restoration works, and a number of educational and community awareness and training activities. When combined with our own ongoing PLCG efforts, the grant will allow us to make major headway toward conserving and restoring important natural habitats within the Pappinbarra Valley. Many thanks NRCMA!

The first community event linked to the NRCMA grant will be held at First Friday on 7th February 2014 – a general 'Show and Tell' session with PLCG members available to explain the nature and purpose of the various conservation works; and to sign up willing new members. In the meantime, if you would like to learn out more about PLCG you can either visit our website (plcg.net.au which is currently underdevelopment – please forgive the missing bits) or just give me a call on 6587-6033.

Kelly Miller, President PLCG

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Weed of the Month - Honey locust (*Gleditsia tricanthos* Fabaceae)

Native to eastern and central USA, honey locust has been in cultivation for many years. It is a widespread tree of parks and gardens, though not particularly common in Australia (compared with, for example, jacaranda or coral tree). It is, however, a pest plant on the rise and a Noxious Weed declaration for the mid north coast is expected to be not too far off. Its weediness is attributable to several features including that it: is a woody plant; is covered in thorns; suckers and seeds profusely and can seriously degrade agricultural and biodiversity assets such as riparian areas, forests and adjoining pastures. Some thornless varieties have been bred, but their seedlings can revert to having thorns.

Identifying the 'true type' of the plant is usually straightforward, owing to the profusion of crucifix-like thorns on the trunk and branches. The compound deciduous leaves are comprised of many smaller leaflets and the spring clusters of



yellow-green flowers are followed by flattened, twisted pods with hard-coated seeds.

The plant is still widely available for sale (for the time being) but I strongly urge you to consider something locally native as an alternative. Red or white cedar or even native frangipani are all fast-growing local species that won't degrade the landscape or impale your guests' kids when playing in the yard.

Regarding any specific or general weed (or native plant) identification or control, contact Council or the DPI for further information, but if you're still having troubles, please just call or email me (petewm@hotmail.com). As always, if you have any plant you'd like identified, pop a sample in a sealed plastic bag along with your contact details into my letterbox (2011 Pappinbarra Rd) and I'll try and identify it for you.

FURTHER INFORMATION - Port Macquarie-Hastings Council (Municipal Ecologist or Noxious Weeds Officer) 6581 8111;
Weeds Australia www.weeds.org.au

Peter Michael

2014 Pappinbarra Calendar

The PPA has produced a Pappinbarra Valley calendar featuring the photos taken by local residents. The calendar will be available at the December First Friday/ Christmas Party for \$15 (with a special deal for purchases of 5 or more).

A great gift idea for friends and family, the calendar shows off the lovely scenery and wildlife of our beautiful valley.

If you can't make it to First Friday then you can purchase one from Sharada Boyce (6587 6079). There are only 100 copies so get in early to make sure you don't miss out!



The Living Room

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	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
6.00		Beginners Running Strength & Core Circuit	Body Balance	Beginners Running 5km	Body Balance	7am Beginners Running 5km
8.30			"make today ridiculously Amazing"			Yoga
9.15	"...tomorrow is another chance..."				Tiny Tutu's Preschool Ballet	
10.30						Yoga Dance
4.00	"...enjoy the little things..."	Zenryoku			Youth Theatre (donation)	
4.30		"if you stumble, make it part of the dance"	Kids Movement (4 - 12yrs)	Zenryoku		"if it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you"
5.30	Body Balance	Yoga Dance	Yoga	Strength & Core		
6.30		Body Balance		Yoga Dance	"Ahimsa" Flow yoga to Live music	

In the Vegie Patch - Solar-powered White Cabbage Butterfly for organic control!

The White Cabbage Butterfly is the most common butterfly you see in the garden. It favours plants from the Brassica family such as cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli. The caterpillars are very destructive and can destroy plants in a very short time. Since White Cabbage Butterflies are very territorial insects and will not lay eggs where they see another white butterfly, the use of the solar powered White Cabbage Butterfly will deter other butterflies from laying eggs in your garden .



Now is the ideal time to plant all the vine crops: pumpkins, melons, cucumbers and beans. Mix some potash into the soil (as per instructions on packet) and you will be rewarded with a good crop.

Happy Gardening
Alison

Cocky Corner

Hopefully we have the beginnings of soaking rains and a lush valley for summer. Valley farmer and schoolteacher, Mark Hickson, returned shocked from a Store Cattle Sale at Wauchope. He bought ten heifers at \$150 each and nine cows at \$200 each for Camden Haven High School's breeding program. How can farmers afford to care for and feed cattle when they can only sell at these prices? Of course there are factors such as the Queensland drought, the live export issues and coming out of a dry winter but farmers just cannot afford to raise quality cattle for such a small return.

In *The Land* of 19 September 2013, John Carter wrote: *Last week the US feeder heifer market averaged A\$3.70 kg live weight. The same heifer at Wagga Wagga averaged A\$1.45 kg. US producers are currently receiving 47% of the consumer dollar, Australian producers are receiving less than 25%. We are being ripped off by the processor and retail duopolies.*

Kelly Miller

Bird of the Month – Azure Kingfisher

Scientific name: *Ceyx azureus*

Other names: Blue, Creek, Purple, River or Water Kingfisher

Size: 17-19 cm.

Status: Secure in north of range, near threatened in Victoria and endangered in Tasmania.

The Azure Kingfisher is a small river kingfisher with a long black bill and a short tail. The head and upper parts of the body are a deep azure blue with darkish flight feathers while the underparts are a rufous-orange colour. The head has buff-white stripes on the sides of the neck and small orange spots between the eyes and bill. The legs and feet are red with two toes forward and one back. The sexes are generally similar with young birds having duller plumage but with a darker head.

These birds are usually silent, but do make a very high pitched “peet-peet” in flight.

They are found across Northern Australia and down the East coast south into Victoria and Tasmania.

Usually singly or in pairs, they frequent fresh-water streams, billabongs, lakes or mangroves, hunting for prey from shaded overhanging perches, all the while bobbing their head up and down and then diving into the water to catch small fish or crustaceans and other aquatic life. The prey is sometimes beaten against the perch before being swallowed head-first.

Breeding occurs from September to January. The nest chamber is up to one metre along an upward-sloping tunnel burrowed into soil in a riverbank. Four to seven eggs are

incubated and the young raised by both parents.

Threats to the survival of Azure Kingfishers include habitat alteration or destruction such as cattle grazing in riparian zones, increased stream turbidity from eroded soil, and competition for food resources from introduced species like carp and trout.

For further information about this or other species contact can be made through: peter_fac@yahoo.com.au

Peter Fackender



A Netted Orchard

Kerry Rowley has been aspiring to self-sufficiency in fruit, vegetables and eggs since the family came to the Pappinbarra Valley several years ago. Continually frustrated by the healthy population of bower birds and other species stripping the ripening fruit, crows stealing eggs, ducks flying off, and dogs molesting chooks, she decided to follow the example of a couple of others and construct a netted orchard.

After an area of about three tennis courts was fenced with 1.8 metre-high chicken mesh and some pretty tall poles installed, members of the Pappinbarra Ladies' and Gentlemen's Gardening Auxiliary (PLAGGA) and other friends were called in to help raise the netting (purchased via the internet). Their hard work was rewarded with morning tea and a big barbecue.

The orchard, visible from the road, goes down the hillside to

provide different microclimates on different levels. Kerry will experiment with varied fruit tree species, including tropical ones, to see how the concept works. Ducks and chooks will be confined, eat pests and manure the trees. Potential pest species like guavas, will be inaccessible to birds, so won't be spread round the countryside.

Kerry is convinced that home-grown fruit and vegetables are far superior in both taste and nutrient value to any tired old produce from the supermarkets. With a tradie husband, she is keen to be at home for the kids, but also wants to 'feel valuable' and help contribute to family finances by selling excess produce. We wish her luck and are sure that many others will follow her example. Keep your eye on the bus shelter with the red flag for excess fresh produce!

Hastings Christmas Farmers' Market

There will be a special Twilight Market at the Wauchope Showground on Monday 23rd December from 3 to 7 pm. Perfect timing for buying fresh produce for your Christmas lunch, hand-made chocolates and hand-crafted Christmas gifts!

Elly Franchimont, Market Coordinator

Times Past - the three Rs

The Pappinbarra valley was first opened up for settlement in the 1890s. About 25 km up the valley from Beechwood, the Flanagan, Landrigan, Lewis, Murray, Reynolds and Wallis families were among the earliest settlers. Pappinbarra's first school was a subsidised one on Landrigan's property and appears to have begun operation in 1905. No application had been made for a school further up, hence the school was known as Upper Pappinbarra Subsidised School. Enrolled were Wilfred and Harold Reynolds, Vernie, Gladys and Elma Flanagan, Pearl Wallis, Ada Lewis, Tom and Molly Ninness and Percy Tolhurst. Norman Trotter, a bachelor who lived on his own property, was the first teacher (right).

Former pupil Pearl Lyon, recalled that the school was built of slabs with a shingle roof. Trees and bushes served as the toilet and there was no water tank. Mr Trotter had dug out a little bank in the playground where he boiled the billy at lunch time. Families took it in turn to supply his lunch, and he sometimes had hot meals with the Lewis family. As it was a subsidised school, the parents were responsible for supplying the building, furniture and board for the teacher, but Mr Trotter had his own place up the river and cooked his own evening meal. He walked everywhere and as Pearl lived in the same direction as his place she walked with him to and from school.

Twenty five years after its closure, parents began a long and confused battle with the NSW Dept of Instruction to have the school reinstated. At the same time, settlers in Cedar Scrub, the most remote residents of the valley, were successful in their request to the Department for a school for their children. The Sydney-based bureaucrats could not understand why children from the previous Upper Pappinbarra couldn't attend school at Cedar Scrub. The parents persisted, and even opened their own unofficial school at *Ferndale*, the property of George and Frances Lewis, until finally in 1932 they were granted a subsidised school in 'Central Pappinbarra'. Growing attendance and cramped conditions forced the reopening of the old slab hut used by their parents a generation before.

By today's standards, the conditions that the teacher and pupils had to endure were appalling, though by no means unique in rural areas. The slab hut had a dirt floor, shingle roof, wooden shutters on the unglazed windows and no water tank. This rough and rudimentary facility had struggled to meet the needs of the community a generation earlier, and after so many years of abandonment the situation had only worsened.

During the tenure of Miss Debenham, the first teacher, a rough wooden floor was laid over the earth floor. Subsequent teachers were Miss E. Welsh (1934-35) and Mr Cecil House, who came to the school in 1936. Mr House described the dark interior when windy or wet weather forced him to close the shutters, the extremes of temperature, the cramped space and the lack of storage area. Termites destroyed anything that could not be sealed in a tin. In fact Jack Lewis, who was a pupil at the school, recounts

how 'anyone lingering too long on the toilet seat ran the very real risk of being bitten on the bum by termites'! He also recalls that as a pupil, there were advantages too - swimming in the nearby Pappinbarra Creek, an endless playground, and individual attention from the teacher.

Cecil House was able to convince the Department to send out a school inspector, who found the conditions at the school indefensible. New toilets were built urgently, and, soon after, a new school building was erected.

The school closed in 1945 and the building was transferred to Ellenborough in 1948.

Mary Wagg



Photos from Lyons collection
courtesy Dawn Pritchard

Allsorts' Fables: The Golden Whistler

Better than wolf-whistles, this little bird knows how to put on an impressive show.

So I was surprised to find, walking high in the hills, one of these little blokes face-down and impeccably dead in a dark pool between big rocks. Who got him? His wings akimbo, tail fanned slightly, his rich black cowl framing a pristine white collar and enough of the brilliant yellow plumage of the chest on show to prove this boy was a star in the heraldry of avian knights: a chivalric hero. Maybe a hawk in the high forest tops had whacked him? But there



was no sign of blood on this little fellow; instead he was spread across the still, dark water like a magnificent European crest - more colourful than the Hapsburgs' eagles, if smaller, of course.

Back at the shack, a penny dropped when another golden whistler recited his full-throated repertoire and then attacked his own reflection in the window glass. Nor did this one tire of repulsing his own image, but returned to do battle, again and again; defeated only by hunger he would fly off and feed on insects only to return in half an hour and repeat the attack. The stand-off lasted a week and then a month. By this time his song had faded; the girls by now were all busy with babies and he could only manage a peremptory tweet before his aerial attack on the perceived intruder reflected in my admittedly dirty window glass. Luckily both combatants survived this war. His brother high in the hills was not so lucky.

And the moral of this fable? Make love not war!

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 @ the **GLASSHOUSE PORT MACQUARIE**
 includes morning tea

Now in its sixth year, the free Access All Areas Film Festival celebrates how the joy of cinema can be opened up to everyone regardless of disability. The festival takes movies with open captions on the road throughout Australia.

The screening will include ten short, family friendly films.
 The venue is wheelchair accessible

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Rural Fire Service Update: Hollisdale Brigade

It has been a fairly busy month again. We were asked to join a five-truck strike team from the Mid North Coast and go to Singleton for four days. Our crew was made up of two Hollisdale, one Pappinbarra and two Byabarra Firefighters. It certainly was an experience working with other crews and helicopters water bombing ten feet from our truck.

The smoke you have been seeing over the past couple of weeks was from fires up and down the coast. A section 44 was declared again for the Taree and Hastings Districts. The closest fire to us was behind the Wilson River Reserve, up the Right Arm of Pappinbarra Road. There was great concern that it would jump the road and get into the Pappinbarra Valley, but the rain helped us out and stopped it. The section 44 was cancelled on 17 November.

A big thanks to everyone who supported our BBQ and raffle; we raised enough money to purchase a fridge for the fire shed. Our next fundraiser will be drawn on 21 December outside the IGA at Wauchope at 3 pm - with over \$500 worth of donated prizes to be won. Tickets will be on sale at the December First Friday BBQ (at the Hall) so don't forget to bring your money.

Chris Roelandts

Fire Permits and Bush Fire Danger Period

The statutory Bush Fire Danger Period runs from 1 October to 31 March, but may vary due to local conditions. If you are planning to light a fire in the open during this time, you will need a Fire Permit.

The aim of the Fire Permit is to ensure fire will be used safely. A Permit imposes conditions on the way a fire is lit and maintained, and can only be issued by authorised Permit Issuing Officers (see below). The issuing Officer may add any conditions deemed necessary, but all permits have standard conditions that are listed on the form, such as:

- the Permit is to be carried by the permit holder, or another person at all times at the site of the fire.
- the fire must be supervised at all times.
- notifications are given to the RFS, and adjoining neighbours at least 24 hours prior to the fire being lit and the permit may be varied, cancelled or suspended, depending on weather conditions.

A Fire Permit is **not** required for a heating or cooking fire, provided that the fire is in a permanently constructed fireplace at a site cleared for at least two metres all around and the fire is completely extinguished before leaving. During a **Total Fire Ban no fire may be lit in the open and all Fire Permits are suspended**. This includes incinerators and barbecues which burn solid fuel.

Lighting a fire on a day of Total Fire Ban attracts a fine of up to \$5500 and/or 12 months gaol. Penalties for a fire that escapes and damages or destroys life, property or the environment can attract much greater fines and gaol terms with maximums at \$100,000 and/or 14 years gaol.

At the time of writing, fire danger on the North Coast is low to moderate and there is no Fire Ban in place. This could change with hot and dry weather. **Permits are required until 31 March.**

After obtaining a Permit and before lighting a fire, you must ensure that it can be contained and controlled within the specified area; it does not contain toxic materials such as rubber tyres, plastics or paint, and it must not cause an air pollution problem by producing excessive amounts of smoke. The Permit is **automatically suspended on Total Fire Ban Days**, days of **Extreme Fire Danger**, or when the Environment Protection Authority declares a **NO BURN DAY**. Environmental Information Line: 131 555.

Damian Privett from the RFS website

BUSHFIRE DANGER PERIOD

No fires without a permit.

Prior to a burn you must to give your neighbours notice 24 hours in advance.

IN CASE OF FIRE – CALL 000

Fire Permit Officers: Upper Pappinbarra: Steve Ostler 6587-6090; Bob Ostler 6587-6180; Anthony Wall 6587-6127 or Andrew Jarrett 6587-6181; Hollisdale and Lower Pappinbarra: Lyn Blythe 6587-6186; Beechwood: Sam Elphick 0428-856-222.

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A Bandy-bandy and its blind-snake dinner

Over the last month we have seen Bandy-bandy snakes (*Vermicella annulata*) on Pappinbarra Road on at least five occasions and it seems that our valley supports a healthy population of these beautiful animals. Four were alive and seemed to be basking on the asphalt. By the time we had turned around for a closer look, they were gone. The one in the picture sadly had been run over and killed. When Angela first picked it up she was confused by what seemed to be a second snake intertwined with the first. It turned out to be a blind-snake, almost as long as the Bandy-bandy itself, that recently had been swallowed by the Bandy-bandy. With such a huge load of food in its gut, it probably had trouble moving at all.

Bandy-bandys are front-fanged venomous snakes related to black snakes and brown snakes. They are found over most of eastern Australia but are usually described as 'uncommon' although this may be because they are rarely seen. Strange as it seems, Bandy-bandys are habitual blind-snake eaters and are mostly active at night. They can grow to almost 1 m in length but even the largest individuals pose no real threat to people as they are entirely non-aggressive. In fact their best defence is to throw their body into stiff loops and thrash around – presumably the flashing black and white colours deter potential predators. However, with any snake it is always best to err on the side of caution, so if do you come across a Bandy-bandy on the road or in your garden, show it some respect and avoid an encounter with its tiny fangs.

Blind-snakes are another fascinating group of snakes – they seem to eat nothing much except ant eggs! More on them another time.

Ken Aplin and Angela Frost



Road kill Bandy-bandy with its blind snake dinner coming out of its stomach



The looping behaviour of the bandy-bandy is a defence against predators

Editorial

As 2013 draws fast to its close, we can look out on greener paddocks and hope that the bushfire threat won't loom again this season. Life in the country is a battle - but one with wonderful compensations, many of which have been mentioned in this December-January *Pitchfork*. It is a bigger issue than usual because it covers two months and I received so much of interest. If you have any ideas for articles, need to advertise in 2014, or simply want to give feedback, please feel free to contact me. From our household, *Bushed* has dominated the scene for many months. That the tiny idea came to fruition in such a satisfying way (for everyone involved in the production and performances and for our three audiences) is a real achievement for our little community. It was a great team effort and every contribution was appreciated. We made a profit of over \$3000 for PPA.

There are several moves afoot for more drama in Hollisdale Hall in the future. Keep your ears and eyes open if you are interested in being part of the Pappinbarra Players' next production. More news about this in the February *Pitchfork*, when the festive season is behind us.

In conclusion, the *Pitchfork* team wishes all our readers a Very Happy Christmas and a New Year that brings you contentment and fulfilment. We hope to see you at our December First Friday.

Jean Hegarty

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First month free for PPA members. Contact Sharada 6587 6079.

Pilgrim geese for sale. 5 months old. \$20 each. Call Emma 6587 6103

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Wanted: any old 100% cotton or woollen jumpers, even if "holy". I will repurpose them. You can just stick 'em in my letterbox at number 2011 or give me a tootle on 6587 6022 and I'll pick them up. Thanks!"

Wanted to Rent
House somewhere in Pappinbarra or surrounds. Even a shack or granny flat would do.
Call 65876030

Wanted

Missing something from your life? Is it CREME CARAMELS?! Would the winner of said prize from Trivia Night waaaay back in May please contact Chay Khamson 6587 6022. I have not forgotten - don't be shy! Get in before some cheeky person tries. I will whip up a fresh batch, the old one just started walking...;-)"

Miscellaneous

Bee swarm collection service. Don't panic as swarming bees rarely sting.
Ring Jean on 6587 6077

Calling all shepherds...

As owners of a little flock we are sometimes looking to introduce new blood or for purchasers for the lambs. If you are in the same situation and would like to form a small email/ phone network of local sheep breeders for swapping buying or selling, contact Steve and Mary Wagg on stevewagg@skymesh.com.au



PPA Matters

PPA Committee meetings – Usually the Friday before First Friday at 6pm. All welcome.

General Meetings – quarterly. Next general meeting will be in March. All welcome.

Facilities for Hire

Hollisdale Hall – contact Sue Frost 6587 6129

Upper Pappinbarra facilities and tennis court - contact Damian Privett 6587 6185

Pitchfork

Circulation

Pitchfork has hardcopy and email circulation of approximately 280. It comes out on the weekend **before** First Friday - **Friday, 31 January** for the **February Issue**. Material for the **February Issue** to the Editor by **Wednesday, 22 January**. We run both casual and regular **advertisements** at very competitive rates. Contact Sharada Boyce.

Production Team

Editor: Jean Hegarty jeanmay@bluemaxx.com.au 6587 6077

Production: Angela Frost angfrost@hotmail.com

Advertising: sharadaboyce@yahoo.com.au 6587 6079

Contact Jean Hegarty if you wish to register for *ePitchfork*.

The views expressed in *Pitchfork* are not necessarily those of the PPA.

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President: Jean Hegarty 6587 6077

Vice President: Mary Walker 6587 6055

Treasurer: Sue Frost 6587 6129

Secretary: Elly Franchimont 6587 6097

Other Committee Members:

Sharada Boyce

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George Hegarty

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