

Third Quarter: September 2015

## Dates for Your Diary 2015

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September, 7.30 p.m., GENERAL MEETING. Heritage Centre meeting room.

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September, 10 a.m. Red Rocks Coastcare working bee. Weed control.

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October, 10 a.m. Saltwater Creek Coastcare Working bee. Weeding/clean up

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 10 a.m. Spurgebusters at Justice Rd.

Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2016, 6.30 p.m. AGM. Parish Hall Cowes.

**Enquiries:** Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501 m 0400 900 612 e: [cgrayden@waterfront.net.au](mailto:cgrayden@waterfront.net.au)

*Sub-committees of PICS:*

**Red Rocks Coastcare:** Co-ordinator is John Eddy, ph 5956 8501 e: [cgrayden@waterfront.net.au](mailto:cgrayden@waterfront.net.au)

**Saltwater Creek Coastcare:** Co-ordinator is Kevin Harris [kevin@grating.com.au](mailto:kevin@grating.com.au)

*Other groups:*

**Preserve Western Port Action Group** (against the Port of Hastings): [preservewesternport@gmail.com](mailto:preservewesternport@gmail.com) Official phone number is: 0456 612 852 Facebook: Preserve Western Port Action Group. Media contact: Jeff Nottle [nottle@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nottle@bigpond.net.au) Secretary: Kate 0409 692 425.

**Barb Martin Bush Bank:** Sales and volunteers – every Wednesday + 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month 10 – 1. Phone Anne Davie ph 5956 8216

**Friends of Koalas (FOK) Habitat Days:** First Sat of every month at 10 a.m. **Koala Count** at the Koala Conservation Centre, second Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

**Friends of Churchill Island (FOCIS):** email: [secretary@focis.org.au](mailto:secretary@focis.org.au)

**Groundswell** Bass Coast Climate Change action group: <http://groundswellbasscoast.com> Contact Ray Astbury: [rugged@people.net.au](mailto:rugged@people.net.au) phone 5952 1991.

**Bird Life Bass Coast:** Penny Manning, convener, [penny@waterfront.net.au](mailto:penny@waterfront.net.au)

**Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve.** Co-ordinator John Eddy h ph 5956 8501 e: [cgrayden@waterfront.net.au](mailto:cgrayden@waterfront.net.au)

## PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC

Saturday September 26, 7.30 p.m.

Heritage Centre Meeting room, 89 Thompson Ave Cowes.



### GENERAL MEETING

Enqs: Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501 e: [cgrayden@waterfront.net.au](mailto:cgrayden@waterfront.net.au)

Speaker: Dr Duncan Sutherland, PINP

“The Eastern Barred Bandicoots on Churchill Island”

All welcome. Supper to follow meeting.

## **PICS COMMITTEE 2015**

President: Anne Davie (media contact 5956 8216) e: bimbadeen@nex.net.au

Vice President: Pauline Taylor ph 5952 5485

Secretary: Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501 e: cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Minutes Secretary: Gillian Collins

Treasurer: Garry Morgan

Committee: Steven Angel (webmaster), Margaret Hancock (planning), Penny Manning (Chair of c/ee and sub c/ee meetings) Terry Nott, Jeff Nottle, Lisa Schonberg.

C/ee meets at 9.30 a.m. on 4<sup>th</sup> Sat of each month at Community Emmaus Room, Parish Hall Cowes.

### ***President's Letter to Members***

After the coldest winter for 26 years, Victorians, including Phillip Islanders, are looking forward to some warm Spring sunshine. The winter has been dry, so good rains on the Island will be welcome to water the recent plantings.

A PICS sub-committee is working on the production of a new brochure, informing people and promoting the role of the Society. It will include PICS activities in preserving and enhancing the Island's environmental assets. It is hoped that the brochure will result in new members because they feel they can have a voice through PICS .

A well-attended meeting in the Heritage Centre, arranged by Minutes Secretary, Gillian Collins, heard two very interesting and informative talks: one on the oil spill response and one by the Captain of the Port of Hastings.

The Preserve Western Port sub-committee continues to meet monthly and was pleased that the Bass Coast Shire Council passed in May a Motion that includes:

“That the Council write to the Special Minister of State and the Minister for Ports reinforcing Council's position in relation to the Port of Hastings and request that the Minister instruct the soon to be established Infrastructure Victoria to engage with the Bass Coast Shire Council on the future of the Port of Hastings, given the importance of Western Port to the Victorian and Australian economy and environment.”

In June some committee members took on the huge task of going through all the boxes of PICS history etc that had been sitting in Margaret Hancock's home for many, many years. The Parish Hall was where the material was sorted and dealt with. Margaret now has more space in her house than she realised!

It was with sadness that the Conservation Society learned of the death of life member, Professor John Swan. He and his wife Ailsa loved Phillip Island with a passion and their devotion and lobbying for its environmental well-being will always be remembered. John Eddy and Christine attended John's Memorial Service at Monash



*Keith Grayden, John and Ailsa Swan, Swan Lake, 1975.*

I am sure you have seen the butterfly sculpture when you drive past Scenic Estate Conservation Reserve [opposite Forrest Caves], that it is now open to the Public. At the last committee meeting it was decided that PICS will be willing to auspice a Friends of Scenic Estate. John Eddy has agreed to lead this Group so we all know “it is in a safe pair of hands”.

With the big Climate Change Conference in Paris soon, the world will be hoping for positive and achievable commitments from the participating nations. I like the quote: We are not the owners, we are the visitors to this planet!

Thanks again to Christine and John for another informative edition of the Penguin Newsletter. *Anne Davie*

## **COASTCARE REPORTS**

### **1. Red Rocks**

Our final planting day was held on 5<sup>th</sup> July. About 100 native Pigface plants grown from cuttings were planted on bare dunes near Red Rocks Point, and 15 Coast Saltbush plants put in on the grassy terrace near the Appley Track Stairs. These plants were all propagated by students at KooWeeRup Secondary College to help with our Coastcare projects.

All the plants we have put in this year appear to be doing well except for some Rhagodia plants which have not survived due to a root disease.

I inspected all the areas for recurrence of Blue Periwinkle on 19<sup>th</sup> July, finding about 7 plants only, which were removed. That serious weed is now well controlled, but seedlings continue to emerge in small numbers, requiring on-going monitoring.

Our next working bee will be held on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> Sep, as usual starting at 10am from the Red Rocks carpark. We will concentrate on some weed control, but may also survey our beach for marine debris, including plastic “nurdles”. All welcome.

### **2. Saltwater Creek:**

Another 200 plants were put in on 28<sup>th</sup> June, by 9 volunteers. This was in addition to the 1000 or so put in 2 weeks prior to that.

I checked out the site on 18<sup>th</sup> July, and found most plants establishing well. Again, some small Rhagodia plants had failed. Low rainfall continues to be an issue. The total for winter has been only 75% of the long term average.

The project funded last year by a \$6800 Coastcare Community grant and entitled “Restoration of Coast Banksia Woodland at Saltwater Creek” is now completed. As well as the removal of boxthorn, control of kikuyu, and the planting of over 1200 plants, it included the production of an attractive and informative brochure promoting the new Coastcare group and the conservation values of the area. 1000 copies have been printed for distribution in the local area, and elsewhere. Thanks to Steve Malone for his efforts in compiling the brochure, and to Lisa Schonberg for some beautiful photos.

*John Eddy, Red Rocks Coastcare co-ordinator*

## **Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve**

Following years of community concern about the misuse of Scenic Estate, locally known as “Chinaman’s”, 2014 saw major progress with the Bass Coast Shire Council’s project assisted by a \$300,000 grant from Regional Development Victoria. This arose after the Council in 2013 set aside the council-owned land on the old estate as a Conservation Reserve, then cleaned up a huge amount of rubbish and partnered with the Phillip Island Nature Parks and Parks Victoria to set up the Reserve with tracks, boardwalk, an excavated wetlands, picnic shelters, a viewing platform and extensive planting.



The Council then resolved to draw on the great support from the community by facilitating the formation of a Friends group to assist with ongoing management of the Reserve. Following a meeting on site in early August, a special meeting of interested parties was held in Cowes on 1<sup>st</sup> September, and the Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve group was formed. The meeting unanimously accepted the proposal that the new group operate under the auspices of PICS, and nominated PICS member John Eddy as co-ordinator, supported by a committee consisting of Carmen Bush, Michael Whelan, a Council representative (Dave Martin), a PINP representative (Samantha Coleman) and honorary member Cr Phil Wright.

The new committee will meet on 15<sup>th</sup> September to start to clarify objectives for the group, identify key issues and priorities, and plan a schedule for activities over the next 12 months. We look forward to support from many enthusiastic volunteers.

*John Eddy, Co-ordinator.*

## *Planning Matters*

### 1. Friends of Blue Gum Reserve:

Quiet, but positive progress is being made with caring for the Blue Gum Reserve. Trained members of Bass Coast Shire staff have numbered ALL 212 trees and prepared “Blue Gum Reserve Tree Assessment” which is being cross-referenced with the 33 significant old growth indigenous trees listed in the report prepared by Alison Oates and funded by PICS. These two resource documents are a valuable aid to planning the future well-being of the Reserve.

As Spring progresses we are watching out for the indigenous herbs to appear on the bank on the north side of the Scout Hall. This is an interesting exercise as none of us knows what we are looking for! This area has not been mown for some months, and will not be mown over spring and summer. On Sunday October 11 at 11 a.m., meet at the Scout Hall and come for a “HERB HUNT” with Alison.

The Croquet Club has a new fence, and all the weeds, including mature coprosma, have been removed from the boundary area. Fortunately Kikuyu is limited to the ephemeral wetland area, and will be sprayed when the wetland dries out over Summer.



The Shire is negotiating with Westernport Water for a suitable tap to be installed, probably somewhere near the Croquet Club boundary. An easily accessible water supply will be a great comfort to the “Dog People” and their canine companions who exercise in a part of the Reserve.

*Blue Gum Reserve. Photo Alison Oates.*

### 3. Proposed Caravan Park at Forrest Caves:

Amended, but relatively unchanged plans have been submitted for this site. PICS objection remains the same, this often water-logged site, with its attendant drainage problems, is just NOT the place for such a proposal.

### 4. Proposed Removal of S173 Agreement in Honeysuckle Drive, Silverleaves

PICS took part in a recent meeting, convened by the Shire planning department, which was “an opportunity for applicant to explain permit application 140017 that proposes the two lot subdivision of the land, and the ending of Section 173 Agreement from the subject site”.

The subject land is an elongated site on the south side of Honeysuckle Drive, and to the east of the entrance to Chale Court. If you take time to look at the site, you will understand why this 173 Agreement was put in place, and you will understand why Westernport Water is putting such strict controls dealing with sewage disposal in an unsewered area.

Years before PICS was formed, farsighted members of the community were arguing against subdivision of the low lying land in the Cowes Golf Club/Sanders Road area – how right they were!

We await Bass Coast Shire Council’s decision on this matter. *Margaret Hancock*

**Minutes of the General Meeting held 4.7.2015 at the Heritage Centre meeting room,  
Cowes, 7.30 p.m.**

Present: As per the Attendance Book

Apologies: As per the Attendance Book

That standing orders be suspended: Pauline Taylor/John Eddy

The chair Anne Davie suspended standing orders in order to be able to acknowledge the enormous work for the environment done by Joan Kirner and PICS Life Member John Swan, both of whom have recently died.

The meeting was preceded by a Power Point talk by Aileen Vening titled “Renewable energy – Why Not?” based on Al Gore training.

After the talk the meeting was addressed by two volunteers from the Sea Shepherd organisation: Haans Siver and Gerald Millington. Haans talked about recent trips to Antarctica to harass the Patagonian Tooth Fish poachers, which are dominated by the Spanish mafia. Gerald talked about the dolphin killing in Japan.

Resume standing orders: Pauline Taylor/John Eddy

Minutes of previous meeting held Saturday April 11, 2015: Moved Margaret Hancock. Seconded Pauline Taylor  
*Carried.*

Business arising:

1. Blue Gum Reserve. All significant trees (approx 132) to be cross referenced to Alison Oates report. Significant indigenous herbs are found near the Scout Hall – out once a year with single blade. Large eucalypts trees have recently been planted by “experts” of unknown qualifications. Shire staff are attending inservicing regarding “Hollows in trees for nesting”.

2. Feral Cats abatement plan: Christine will forward a submission on behalf of PICS.

3. Come for a Walk book: unsuccessful in Bendigo Bank grant application.

Correspondence:

Inwards:

Bruce Atkin/Andy Gray re Andy’s term as state Coascare co-ordinator now finished.

Greg Hunt Environment Update

Central Regional Coastal Board thanking us for submission. Now on their website.

Ideas for membership drive from Steve Angel

Thanks from new member David Baird.

Outwards:

Welcome to new member David Baird.

General Business:

#### 1. COASTCARE REPORT TO PICS G.M. 4.7.15 – JOHN EDDY

##### 1. RED ROCKS COASTCARE:

The main Planting Day was held on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June, and has been reported in some detail in the recent PICS newsletter, and the local paper. Our second Planting Day is tomorrow. We will be planting about 100 indigenous pigface plants into dunes at Red Rock Point, and 15 Coast Saltbush on the grassy dune terrace near the Appley Ave stairs. These plants plus some 60 Bower Spinach plants used at Saltwater Creek, were grown from cuttings by students at Koo Wee Rup Secondary College in 2014 for Coastcare.

Motion: “That PICS send a letter of thanks to students of 901 Science, Koo Wee Rup Secondary College for propagating the pigface and bower spinach plants for Coastcare during 2014.” John Eddy/Ross Lloyd. *Carried.*

##### 2. SALTWATER CREEK COASTCARE

The main Planting Day was Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June. About 1000 plants were put in by 26 volunteers. 86 wire guards were installed around Banksia and Bursaria plants. See newsletter. A further 200 plants went in on 28<sup>th</sup> June. This was all part of our grant-funded project to restore Banksia woodland on the site.

A final stage of that project is the production of a brochure about Saltwater Creek Coastcare. We hope to finalise the design by next week. Probably 1000 copies will be printed, at a cost of about \$500. Once that is completed, the project grant acquittal will be completed.

##### 3. DUNES AT WOOLAMI SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB



I was invited by Cr Phil Wright to a discussion between Coastal Geomorphologist Assoc Professor David Kennedy (Melb Univ) and members of the Phillip Island Boardriders Club about their proposal to reduce the height of the dunes that have built up in front of the Surf Life Saving Clubhouse. This would probably involve bulldozing the sand back onto the beach then rapidly revegetating the lowered dune behind protective fencing. The Phillip Island Nature Parks is the Committee of Management for the area, and at the time of the meeting, the proposal had not been taken to them.

#### 4. SPURGEBUSTERS

In a novel example of community involvement, Preserve Western Port secretary Kate Whittaker, took guests to her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations down to the beach at Justice Rd, and got them to pull up sea spurge seedlings. PICS supplied the gloves. Happy Birthday, Kate!

#### 5. BUSHBANK

There seems to be a worrying loss of confidence in the Bush Bank's ability to supply plants as ordered to the Shire and other major customers.

#### 6. BAYVIEW PARK

After several years of control of *Pittosporum* and replanting of indigenous species, the small area of remnant bush at Bayview Park is now very much revitalised, with all plants doing well, and Swamp paperbark regrowing thickly. We intend planting a further 20 Prickly Moses wattles in there tomorrow, following the planting at Red Rocks. Thanks particularly to Sue and Bruno, Patsy and Maurice for the great work done.

2. Special meeting with Shane Vedamuttu regarding oil exploration in the bay was very well attended. See newsletter for report.

3. John Swan's memorial service: John Eddy and Christine Grayden will attend and are taking John Barnard and Tim Ealey.

4. PINP Community Advisory c/ee meeting: 20 Eastern Barred Bandicoots are to be released on Churchill Island as soon as permits are available. Stella Axarlis is retiring after 12 years on PINP Board. She is also the chair of the CAC/ee.

5. That David Baird be welcomed into the Society John Eddy/Penny Manning. Carried.

6. A weekend of sorting and discarding scores of boxes of old files stored at Margaret's place was held on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June, with strict criteria being followed. Margaret is now storing 5 tubs and 3 boxes which is much more manageable.

7. Anne stated it was very exciting to see such a large attendance for the speakers.

8. Anne thanked John and Christine for the excellent recent newsletter. Meeting closed 10.15 p.m.

## ***RHYLL INLET WALK***

**By Linda Cuttriss**

August 29, 2015

I HEAR no roar of the ocean, no sound of waves pounding the coast. I am standing on the sheltered side of Phillip Island, on the bluff above Rhyll Inlet, listening to the north-westerly wind whispering through the she-oaks. Rhyll Inlet Walk begins at McIllwraith Road where the township of Rhyll meets farmland. Above the tree tops I see Observation Point, the sandy spit at the north-east tip of the island. Birds are feeding on the cluster of chocolate-brown volcanic rocks at the inlet's entrance and swans are floating on its surface.

Across the calm waters of Western Port Bay is French Island, a low band of land on the horizon that rises gently westward to the rounded shape of Tortoise Head. Beyond are the northern reaches of Western Port Bay. At low tide, Observation Point ends in an outstretched finger that bends softly inward as if to protect this special place. The inlet's winding channels are exposed and the sprawling mudflats are feeding grounds for resident and migratory shorebirds.

At high tide, Observation Point is a slender forearm, a safe place for waders, waterbirds and seabirds to rest. A gently curving line defines the mangrove fringe, a line that constantly changes with the ebb and flow of the tide. Around six thousand years ago, the sea had risen from the low levels of the last phase of global cold climate to roughly shape the present coast of Phillip Island. Observation Point was beginning to grow as sand drifted eastward along the northern shore.

Over the centuries, mud washed down from rivers and creeks into Western Port and was carried by currents to settle as tidal mudflats along the eastern shores of the island. Mud crept into the space between Observation Point and the former sea cliffs on which I am standing. The mud was colonised by seagrass meadows and mangrove-fringed salt marsh and soon fish, reptiles, insects, birds and mammals moved in.

Now, each year 20,000 migratory waders – eastern curlews, whimbrels, bar-tailed godwits and red knots – fly from their breeding grounds in China, Siberia and Alaska to feed on the mudflats of Western Port Bay. By the middle of spring they have all arrived. By the end of March they have gone. The walking track weaves through sweet bursaria, gums and wattles, some laden with fragrant blossom. Lomandra grass and sedges spread across the ground. The bush is soft and light and there are glimpses through to the water.

An old truck and a fence post beside the path remind me that farming has been part of this landscape for many years. A small track off the path opens to a lookout above the old Diamond Dolly Quarry where rock was quarried for road material in the 1930s. The yellow-brown rock outcrops beside the lookout were formed in the Cretaceous, around 120 million years ago.

At this time, the basement of Phillip Island was far from the sea. Streams drained down from the hills dumping layers of sand and mud in swampy areas. Time compressed these sediments into mudstones and sandstones which outcrop on Phillip Island only in this small area south of Rhyll Inlet through to Rhyll Road and Conservation Hill.

The Diamond Dolly Quarry provided work for local farmers during the depression but it was short-lived as there was too much clay in the mudstones. I come to a seat overlooking the inlet and sit for a while, enjoying the peace of this place, feeling the gentle morning sun on my face. Further along, the bluff slopes down to a picnic table with views across the expanse of mangroves and salt marsh that stretches to Silverleaves at the eastern edge of Cowes.

I continue on to a boardwalk that meanders through the canopy of low mangrove forest. Below the decking is an upside-down, micro-world where pneumatophores, the mangrove's aerial roots, stick up like muddy soldiers. They march across the sodden ground and mass around the base of the twisted trunks. Flooded twice daily by the tide, it is their mission to breathe in air when the water retreats at low tide.

I wonder if those perfect circles in the mud are home to crabs or shrimps. Creatures such as these are food for spoonbills which live here all year and for migratory birds that come from the other side of the globe.

I stroll through the glossy green canopy to a landing above a wide mangrove-fringed channel. A leaf moves lightly on the water, like a little wooden boat heading out to sea.

I retrace my steps and follow the boardwalk across a wide area of salt marsh, the buffer zone between the land and the sea. Shrubby glasswort nestles up to the mangroves, huddles around shallow pools laced with red-tinged beaded glasswort and scattered tussock grasses and continues to the rim of tall swamp paperbarks that mark the edge of the salt marsh.

The swamp paperbark forest is almost closed to the sky. I hear the twitter of little bush birds and see the blue flash of a superb fairy wren. Beneath the tall spindly trunks is a carpet of soft green grass. High up on a branch a currawong pecks for insects under the papery bark. The paperbarks give way to eucalypt and acacia woodland and I am surrounded by the sweet perfume of flowering wattles and the sound of bees buzzing around.

*Diamond Dolly quarry.*  
*Linda Cuttriss*



*Phillip Island Conservation Society, Inc.*

***The Penguin Newsletter***

Third Quarter: September 2015

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PO Box 548

COWES, 3922

RHYLL INLET WALK....contd.

As I emerge from the trees, an uneasy feeling comes over me. I get the sense I am being watched. I look across to the edge of the bush and am relieved to see two wallabies staring at me. Before long, the path opens to a grassy rise that leads up to Conservation Hill and the end of the Rhyll Inlet Walk.

On my return, I recall that 20 years ago this path tracked through an open paddock with a high fence in the middle. Since then, the fenced area has regenerated and revegetation by Phillip Island Nature Parks' rangers and volunteers has transformed the farmland to bushland again.

So much has changed in recent decades. Wetlands were once regarded as wastelands, places best "reclaimed" for farming, housing, tourism or industrial development. At Rhyll Inlet saltmarsh was cleared for farming and there was a cattle landing down by the mangroves. The bluff to the west of Conservation Hill was the island's rubbish dump (then transfer station) for almost 65 years until its closure in 2014.

In 1968, a proposal for Rhyll Inlet to be dredged for a safe boat harbour and marina was met with alarm by some Phillip Island residents. The plan was the spark for the start of the Phillip Island Conservation Society and the battle for Rhyll Inlet was won. Now wetlands are valued as feeding grounds and roosting areas for shorebirds and as spawning grounds and nurseries for fish. Saltmarsh and mangroves are valued for filtering pollution, trapping sediments and nutrients and defending the land from erosion.

In 1982, 60,000 hectares of Western Port, including Rhyll Inlet, was declared a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. As I wander back along the walking track I am grateful to the people who have fought for this place. A pelican glides overhead. The sun shimmers through the trees. The wind has picked up and is rustling through the leaves. I stop to look closely at a clematis vine, its creamy buds dripping down like candle wax, poised to burst into flower.

*Linda Cuttriss is a PICS member and was the author, with Eric Bird, of "500 Million Years on Phillip Island". This essay was also published on [basscoastpost.com](http://basscoastpost.com)*