
C.C.V. AWARENESS TOUR - EAST GIPPSLAND - APRIL 30TH - MAY 5TH, 1979.

Notes and Jottings made en route by Reg Johnson

DAY 1

TOORADIN. Foreshore Reserve with rubbish bins well placed - with the result that weekend crowds do not leave the reserve untidy. Reclamation work, which would have removed mangroves has been halted.

GIANT EARTHWORMS. The bus was halted to view the habitat of the giant earthworm, (Bass River, Nyora) a creature known ONLY from the Shire of Korumburra - a unique animal, whose requirements are not completely known. Thanks to Mark and Mrs. Holmes of Korumburra Datsun live specimens, eggs and samples of the soil required by the worm were seen. Mark's extensive knowledge of the worm was appreciated over cups of tea kindly supplied by Mrs. Holmes.

It is worthy of comment that the future existence of an unique animal with a small distribution is left entirely to chance, although it must be conceded that to date it seems to be able to live in harmony with current agricultural practices.

ROADSIDES. All undergrowth had been cleared from many miles of roadside near Nyora. The aesthetic effect compared to the strong growth on the other uncleared side was shattering. Apparently requested by the Country Fire Authority the work had destroyed roadside habitat and appearance. If the fire precaution was to protect adjoining freehold land, then the community would have been much better served by the provision of firebreaks in the adjoining properties. The cost of clearing, compared to ploughing of firebreaks should be argument enough, let alone the danger from the resultant tinder grass, which will replace the removed shrubs.

ELLEN LYNDON PARK, LEONGATHA. A short stop was made at this reserve where Ellen Lyndon supplied the following notes:

About 1964, when we were still on a farm just out of this town, the highway was realigned and cut through the hill. A rough triangle was left between old road and the new. We are at present on the old road.

I worked on my husband and he, in turn went to the Council and asked if we might establish a native park on the vacant land, to show people what would grow in this district. The vogue for growing natives was just gaining momentum.

We got the land, almost an acre. We supplied all plants, growing many and getting generous help from other growers. Boddys Nursery at Geelong gave me 100 trees and shrubs free. The oaks in the playground were part of an old cottage garden. Apex helped with equipment. The Shire cuts the grass and insisted on putting my name on the place. We have supplied native flowers for many displays and functions both at Korumburra and Leongatha and farther afield (including S.G.A.P. and F.N.C.V. shows in Melbourne.

EN ROUTE. As well as delighting us with samples of the fish fossils found near Koonwarra, Ellen also supplied the following notes:

ITEMS OF INTEREST

As you leave this town past drive-in, where the planes fertilise potatoes and patrons alike

3 Acre Shire Gravel Reserve, on Carmodys Road, on your left. Bird Island, Flora reserve, Sanctuary.

Past Koonwarra, over Black Spur Ck road passes through cuttings above the river and our longest rail viaduct.

This is the site of the famous fossil fish find by the C.R.B. some ten years ago. It aroused worldwide interest. Seam is now worked out on road frontage.

Toora Tin field at Granite Bar is a 640 acre sunkland of Tertiary gravels among the Lower Cretaceous (Jurassic) Gippsland hills.

It is split by the Agnes River flats. In this sunkland bounded by fault lines tin was mined by sluicing from about 1896 until 1940. Some gold was also washed out. Water came by a long man-made race some eight miles from Dingo Creek, a tributary of the Agnes. Tunnels brought the race through the spurs and its course may be traced on the paddocks today.

During the war years the late Mrs. Rossiter discovered a colony of the very rare Lacy Wedge Fern in the water race. Most of the race has now been filled in and we presume this rarity is lost here.

Passing Dingo Creek Road off the M'land Highway, on your left again. You are in sight of the great Dingo Creek valley. You will run beside it almost to the Grand Ridge. Conservationists here have been fighting to save the valley until the L.C.C. has considered it. They have had a meeting with representatives of the Forests Commission here to ask that logging be withheld this year.

This request was refused and logging is in progress from the Grand Ridge end, as you can see.

We feel the few tiny National Parks in the Strzeleckis are most inadequate and that nothing has been reserved on the southern fall of the ranges.

Although the timber on the heads of Dingo Ck is only regrowth and somewhat thin, the broad gullies shelter wonderful ferneries, which F.C. promises to spare.

Much of the headwater country of the Agnes has also been logged and we feel the pine farmers are going flat out with logging, for obvious reasons.

By the way, the F.C. has promised to consider only Mountain Ash for the valley of Dingo Creek.

GRAND RIDGE ROAD Without detracting from the gratifying progress made by the Forest Commission of Victoria in replanting VAST expanses of uneconomical farm land to eucalypts, it was noted that a mixture of several species and also many mature trees were visible on natural stands, and that in some cases in the Strzeleckis the farmland had already reverted to bushland which was then cleared for the planting of eucalypts and/or pines.

TARRA VALLEY - BULGA NATIONAL PARKS Two things struck the tour here - the value, interest, habitat and rainforest attractions of the parks and their small size, which meant that visitor saturation could occur on busy days before 10 a.m. Visitor control was inconspicuous and effective for small numbers. Tarra Valley still showed the damage caused by flooding rains twelve months ago. It was noted that as the shape of a park is narrow with a high ratio of boundary length to park area, the invasion of weeds from adjoining freehold land was a constant worry.

The long journey from Melbourne cut down the time available in the parks, but Ranger Ken O'Connor explained more about the parks and park management in Yarram that night.

DAY 2 In good weather again, the trip noted -

POST-AND-RAIL FENCES One of the features of early Victoria, now disappearing from our roadsides. Hopefully some municipal councils will re-erect a few panels in a local park as a reminder of the past.

OMEGA SITE Environmental impact apparently negligible, social and international impact dependent on the use made of the installation.

BRIDGE REPAIRS Flood damaged bridge being repaired with Flood Mitigation Funds near Woodside. One of the problems caused by increased flooding resulting from clearing in the catchments. The party also noted artificial changes of course of a stream in the area.

ESSO SMOKE Black clouds of smoke spread for miles as oil was burnt at the ESSO installation. This appears to be an on-going occurrence.

GOLDEN BEACH Problems of unsuitable subdivisions of the early 1960's were explained, as was government policy to consolidate lots before a building permit was issued.

It was easy to see that close subdivision or any major disturbance would jeopardise the sensitive dune zone. Many passengers enjoyed a stimulating yarn with two National Parks Service officers, met by chance.

The newly-created Gippsland Coastal Park, although narrow in parts, will assist in protecting the coastal hinterland. It was noted that the sands in Lake Reeve were discoloured, presumably by lignan from Maryvale via Dutson Downs.

LAKE COLEMAN Lake Coleman was once one of the State's prime waterfowl areas, but a slow deterioration was noted about 15 years ago with a sudden and complete change about 8 years ago. Today it is a lifeless, practically birdless expanse

of black water. Herb Guyatt of the Victorian Field and Game Association acted as guide to the party. Black, frothy discharges from the Dutson Downs Sewerage Works carried unbelievable quantities of lignan from the pulpmill operations at Maryvale, and by preventing the passage of light, renders the water sterile. This water can move into Lake Wellington and the Gippsland Lakes system and has also had a minor effect on water quality on the wetlands in the nearby R.A.A.F. Bombing Range.

Improvement can only be achieved by treatment at the source, i.e., A.P.M. Maryvale; better treatment at Dutson Downs; restriction of discharge to Lake Coleman; and possibly by extensive use of the discharge for irrigation where the lignan does not appear to affect production.

It seemed incredible that a State asset could have been ruined so completely.

SALE COMMON Many Victorian towns once had a town common where the house cow could find feed. Changed social patterns did away with the need for the commons, which were revoked. Proposals to dispose of the Sale Common by auction were halted by the government on the strong request of the V.F.G.A. Today Sale Common was a highlight, large populations of birds, large flights of ducks and two Cape Barren Geese were noted. Such a waterfowl reserve, so close to a major city promises wonderful opportunities for future popular and scientific study.

It was disquieting to find farm pigs rooting up parts of the Common.

LAKE GUTHRIDGE Right in the heart of Sale, numerous plantings of native and indigenous plants, children fishing and large numbers of the common water birds were noted.

Sale is to be complimented for considering the addition of adjoining swamplands to Lake Duthridge. If Council proceeds with the idea of eliminating the circular drive surrounding the lake and substitutes dead-end access this lake could prove to be an even greater asset.

RIVER IMPROVEMENT Inspection of a levee bank of the Thomson River on the bank furthest from Sale, preventing flooding of agricultural land, leads to increased flooding of urban land on the other bank. Channelisation of the river eliminating large meanders resulted in bank erosion problems. This past work by River Improvement Trust would be unlikely to be approved today, but it is difficult, even now, to see how it was then considered river improvement, which by Act is confined to the "bed and banks".

DAY 3

MITCHELL RIVER SILT JETTIES This unique formation, which has been vastly altered and is still threatened by salinity in a once-fresh lake system, increased run-off from cleared river catchments and pressure from tourists, fishermen and residents, represents a major asset of scientific and educational value. The complete story can only be gained from full reports but our appreciation was made easy by Peter Rennick of the Crown Land Management Section of the Department of Crown Lands and Survey.

PAYNESVILLE. There can be few more depressing welcomes to a township than the Paynesville tip. The end result may be an impressive reclaimed area but during the life of the tip the visitor to Paynesville gets a very poor first impression.

A subdivision of 814 lots on Newlands Arm has been halted until appropriate density of residences and satisfactory disposal of effluent can be provided.

MCLEODS MORASS, BAIRNSDALE. Norman Vincent of the Bairnsdale Environment Group pointed out the wetland values of the Morass, which like the Sale Common, is on the edge of a large country city. Its value for habitat and potential education are enormous. Proposed site for 50 acres excision for the Bairnsdale Sewerage Authority settling ponds. While the site for the new pondage would not necessarily be an unacceptable loss of area, the water levels of the Morass would be considerably subject to alteration. Several alternative methods of disposal of water seemed to be quite practical, and would maintain a water regime acceptable to waterfowl in the Morass. (A plea to save this 50 acres of McLeod's Morass from the Bairnsdale Sewerage Authority was made in C.C.V. June 1978 Newsletter).

GOON NURE. Allotments sold in 1888+ as part of a Land Act township had been neglected by their owners for many years. However the beach at Goon Nure is one of the better beaches on the Gippsland lakes. The Shire, local groups and others opposed building permits for the lots but the Town Planning Appeals Tribunal ruled that building permits must be issued if government did not repurchase the lots. The Shire Engineer from Bairnsdale John Hopkins explained the position, the various pressures and the needs of the community to make use of one of their few beaches.

MOORMUNG FOREST - 950 ha - recently created a Forest Park. - The change will result in restriction of timbergetting to use neighbourhood farms only, a Forest Drive and Picnic Area. The park contained White Stringybark, Forest Red Gum, Gippsland Grey Box, Red Box, Banksia, Shining Peppermints, many Orchids and several large swamps. Grazing will still continue under agistment. Inspection revealed that after years of management for forest produce, understorey shrubs were largely lacking. Our appreciation of the park was greatly heightened by F.C.V. Overseer Phil Morgan, who indicated that management as a Forest Park would alter from some previous practices. Phil led us to a magnificent canoe tree, whose age meant that many holes, pipes and large hollows were available for wildlife. Hopefully future management will ensure that an understorey is produced, at least in large swathes.

SLIDE SHOW. Our night in Bairnsdale was made both enjoyable and informative by a slide show arranged by Keith Watson, Extension Officer of the Ministry for Conservation and made possible by David Stenson who arranged the venue.

Ian Smith of the National Parks Service covered the new parks of East Gippsland.

Roger Bilney of Fisheries and Wildlife Division featured mammals of the district, while Norm Vincent delighted with bird slides.

DAY 4

NATIVE GARDEN. Unfortunately there was not sufficient time to appreciate the Native Garden and Plant Farm of Pauline Tully, Upper Tambo Road, Nicholson. In flowering time this garden would be a delight, and hundreds of desired plants were on sale.

BLUE HORIZONS. An early subdivision just east of Metung had been laid out in small lots on a rectangular grid pattern on a property that screamed out for protection against erosion and effluent problems. One of the passengers, Clive Jackson, was pleased to be able to inspect the area which is part of his current work with the Town and Country Planning Board. The Board is consolidating lots, redesigning and hoping to produce an acceptable subdivision out of what would otherwise have been a shambles.

With his knowledge of planning, Clive had proved an asset to the trip at Goon Nure, Paynesville, the Ninety Mile Beach etc.

NYERIMILANG. When the sale of this lakeside property was imminent proposals to subdivide the property were spiked by government purchase. With a future as an educational centre plus habitat enhancement Nyerimilang may be composed to Sea Winds. The full benefit of Nyerimilang may not be realised for years, until adaptations for its best use are compared

METUNG. A short stop at this township gave an impression of the effect that the pressure of people wishing to live in, or holiday in, an attractive township can gradually erode the natural beauty which draws them to the place. This has not, as yet, run full course at Metung but careful planning and controls are essential to retain Metung's remaining assets.

ROADSIDE BATTERS. At Jenny's Point spraying of a layer of lucern, wood pulp mulch, bitumen and straw on open batters, was holding, whereas the sides of an earthen railway bank had lost all its protective layer and erosion was both active and incipient.

Towards Newmeralla a large expanse of batter had been colonised by *Kennedia rubicunda* forming a most effective volunteer cover. The reason for the natural success of the *Kennedia* is not certain, but investigation would be warranted.

LAKE BUNGA. Managed by the Crown Lands Management Section and a Committee of Management, this beautiful lake, ocean and bushland site demonstrated both the problems of management and the effectiveness of the recently formed Crown Land Management Section. A detailed report is available from the C.C.V. Where ever C.C.V. tours have inspected Crown Land Management activities, the successes warrant government expansion of the manpower and financial resources of the Section.

LAKE TYERS FOREST PARK. David Hocking and Peter Fagg of the F.C.V., met us at the Burnt Bridge Picnic Area in this park. Explanation of the various zones and management strategies was particularly helpful in providing an insight into the principles applying to a multiple use park.

TOSTAREE. Strong pressures to open tracts of Gippsland around Tostaree for agriculture on doubtfully economic farmland led to a trial farm at Tostaree under an inter departmental committee. Experiments showed that, at best, prospects were only marginal. Thanks to the Tostaree Pilot Farm, a repetition of heart breaking settlements such as in the western mallee was avoided.

P.C. Trial Regeneration Plots. Faced with large scale losses of trees circa 1971 when ideal conditions for Cinnamon Fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) prevailed the F.C.V. sought to determine which tree species were resistant. One by product of the trials has shown the efficiency of seeding growth on burnt areas as opposed to sites where all the debris has been removed. At present prospects are good that tolerant species will be found to withstand all but outbreaks of P.C. under its most suitable conditions. Another site showed encouraging growth under normal seeding procedures. An excavation, in a badly hit site demonstrated the near surface deep layer of clay which produces topsoil conditions most favourable to P.C.

DAY 5.

ERINUNDRA PLATEAU. The good weather that had prevailed gave way to overnight rain which put the kibosh on planned itinerary. But despite this and thanks to Gus Geary, F.C.V., and David Cameron of F.C.V., (and LaTrobe University) everyone on tour profited and gained an appreciation of F.C.V. activities and problems. To cover the details would take pages, but, suffice to say, close looks at operation sites and regeneration after cropping, softened most passengers attitude to clear felling, provided environmental requirements are met.

Tribute must be paid to passengers, who clenched teeth and hung on as the bus slid towards a steep drop and to the bulldozer driver who waited to tow the bus through new roadworks made difficult by the rain. However full praise must go to busdriver Bob, who was asked to take the bus through conditions rendered extremely trying by overnight rain.

Our understanding of the values of the Erinundra Plateau was made much easier by Gus and by David, who gave up the previous evening to speak to us on the vegetation of the plateau. David's slides of vegetation and his discourse on his studies made a memorable night

DAY 6.

Because of the distance of the mountains of East Gippsland from Melbourne the last day was simply a pleasant if long drive home - with a detour through Bruthen where the roads were lined with blossoming Sunshine Wattle for our benefit, perhaps.

Lunch was in the almost ghost town of Yallourn, which is being dismantled to give access to the coal underneath. Yallourn, once hailed as a model town, emphasises the need to keep all options open and the need to husband our resources rather than to indulge in wholesale export of the riches of our country be they uranium, coal, minerals or woodchip.

Arrival in Melbourne was 16 minutes ahead of schedule.

General

While within the coverage of the Town and Country Planning Board's Gippsland Lakes Land Use Strategy Plan, much use was made of the plan and the wisdom of its Policies was appreciated. Hopefully developmental pressures will not prevent the plan from being implemented.

Any tour which covers 900 miles has ample opportunity to study treatment of the road verges. It seems that unless the present removal of natural vegetation is halted and reversed the end result must be replacement with disciplined plantations of exotics and economically procurable natives. The growing awareness of the value of roadsides for animal habitat and vegetation reservoirs demand that such deleterious practices as cultivation of the roadsides, as near Lang Lang, and removed of vegetation, as near Nyora be replaced by more enlightened methods.

More detailed reports on some of the places visited are available (from the C.C.V.) at cost of copying and postage.

As further tours are envisaged new intending passengers should ensure that their names are placed on the mailing list immediately.

It is impossible to recognise adequately the assistance of the many individuals, groups and government departments, which make an Awareness Tour possible, but they all must take a share of the credit for the outstanding success of this tour.

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