

COOLEMAN RIDGE PARK CARE GROUP

Newsletter
September 2018

Previous meeting
Sunday 19 August
Kathner St

A wintry Canberra afternoon with threats of rain failed to deter Linda, Doug, Alan, Chris, Rohan, Gosta, Malcolm and Rob setting out from the end of Kathner St towards what is known at the Olympic site. This site is west of the dam and the main trail leading up the Ridge. We all disposed of *Verbascum* and removed the old plant guards dotted across the slope. One or two briar roses were also dealt with. Gosta concentrated on his patch with others later moving to the east side of the trail to mop up Paterson's Curse rosettes and emerging St John's Wort. Doug potted around in the western corner of the Olympic site grubbing out *Verbascum* and attacking woody weeds, mainly briar roses and one hawthorn. The forecasted rain did not arrive until we were on our way back to the car park.

Gosta removes old tree guards, Linda *Verbascum*
Photo: Rob Lundie

Rob Lundie

Next Meeting
Sunday 16 September
Above Chauvel Circle

Time: 1.30 pm– 4.00 pm

Meet: above Chauvel Circle

Bring: hat, gloves, secateurs, dabbler, over,
hacker, drink, raincoat if it is wet

Task: plant identification, weeding

Contact: Linda Spinaze 6288 6916

Oct meeting: Sun 21 Oct, Darrell Place

Saffron Thistle: its part in local history
(continued)

In December 1922, as another hot summer took hold in the district after an abnormally wet year, bringing the thistle heads to maturity and new seeding, Powell wrote to the department in despair. He could not afford now to employ labour and he had not paid for his second lot of fencing; 'the cutting of thistles alone could not be done under £100. What is to be done?' For this he had no answers, nor the resources to cope. Further departmental letters followed. A memo from Frederick Cox on 7 March 1922 stated, 'No evidence of any attempt to carry out the destruction of thistles. This is a 25 year lease, Powell is a returned soldier.' Goodwin's response from Melbourne was that a legal summons – for eviction and termination of the lease – needed to be issued. Deputy Crown Solicitor, Fred Whitlam, advised against this move as 'no good

purpose can be served by this'. While prompted by a legal technicality, this decision reads as one that took into account some of the factors the settlers were struggling against. November 1922 saw good rains falling in the district so the summer brought another heavy crop of weeds on the land. Thistles were especially dense on the rocky hill on the southern boundary, known as Stranger Hill. Having no resources available to manage this difficult block, Powell gave up the lease, which was terminated in February 1924. He had still not repaid his stock mortgage of £222/15/- by March 1924. After that the local people always knew the block as 'Powell's' and the word seemed to call up something of the man's early struggles. Merv Edlington recalled years later: 'The block was always called 'Powell's'. You may not believe it but that man Powell just walked off the block through eradication of saffron thistles. It's hard to believe it isn't it? The thistles beat him - he just couldn't keep up with them. It was allotted to my father afterwards.'

Jenny Horsfield

Kurrajongs under Eucalypts: how come?

For those unfamiliar with the name "Kurrajong" (*Brachychiton populneus*), these are the trees with the dark green leaves somewhat scattered about on Cooleman Ridge (Photo 1). Kurrajongs are a relative of the coast's Illawarra Flame Tree (*Brachychiton acerifolius*) - deciduous trees with spectacular red flowers you can see in spring. The biggest Kurrajong on the Ridge, as far as I know, is on the southern side near the circular concrete reservoir: this tree is about 18m tall with a circumference of about 230 cm (Photo 1).

Kurrajongs are quite common at the Kathner St end of the reserve where they seem to be invariably associated with a living, dead, or dead-and-down eucalypt. Small Kurrajongs can be found under eucalypts there even when there is no seed-bearing adult Kurrajong in sight.

Later stages of growth in which the canopy of the Kurrajong may be seen growing up into the eucalypt canopy also occur (as on the left hand side of Photo 2).

Photo 2: Kurrajong

Photo: Malcolm Gill

The reason why Kurrajongs establish below eucalypt canopies seems to be obvious – birds carrying seeds to the site, one way or another, and depositing them there. The Pied Currawong seems a likely candidate, perhaps regurgitating seed pellets or excreting faeces while perched in the tree. Cockatoos and parrots are another possibility for the carriage of seeds to the site.

Discovering the details of how the seedlings come to be so common under eucalypts is a challenge you might like to take up – which birds, how, when?

Malcolm Gill

Annual General Meeting

10.30 am

Sunday 18 November 2018

Lincoln Close, Chapman

All welcome

Photo 1: Kurrajong

Photo: Malcolm Gill