

Monday 14th February 2022

Bonnie Vale

An NPA SSB inspection



Variegated Fairy Wren: the males often refuse to come out into the open!





Willie Wagtail: never shy!!!!



Yes, it would one day have been littoral rainforest: still remnants

Cabbage Tree Palm



Confiding Pacific Black Duck



Grey Teal



Weed issues: Cestrum growing alongside the lagoon

But we were not here just to see birds and plants, however much they tempt! We were here to check how the precinct looks now much of the initial redevelopment has been completed.

And as there is a DA on display for the historic Simpson's Cottage we headed there first! According to Judith Carrick¹, the first settler at Bonnie Vale was George Simpson. After he retired from working on the Thomas Holt-owned market gardens on the northern side of Port Hacking he selected for Conditional Purchase 20 hectares of land here in 1863 and built a small stone house on the site while farming the land. Eventually his son, William, built what was then called Simpson's Hotel in the 1880s (it changed its name a few times) and it became a popular holiday spot, complete with its own ferry service and jetty. The current DA proposes an addition to the historic c.1867 Simpsons Cottage at Bundeena, directly adjacent to the Bonnie Vale Precinct. A large extension to the house, which may allow it to be used for wedding receptions, despite the Environmental C3 zoning. Objections must be submitted by 9 February.²

¹ Judith Carrick, "History of Royal National Park, 1879-2013", page 28

² General comments here -

https://www.planningalerts.org.au/applications/2273178?utm_campaign=view-comment&utm_medium=email&utm_source=alerts

The plan here -

[https://propertydevelopment.ssc.nsw.gov.au/PublicEPropertyPDF/DA211294%20Original%20Architectural%20Drawings%20-%20\[A7985330\].pdf](https://propertydevelopment.ssc.nsw.gov.au/PublicEPropertyPDF/DA211294%20Original%20Architectural%20Drawings%20-%20[A7985330].pdf)

Photos / heritage 'impact assessment' supplied by the owner - here

[https://propertydevelopment.ssc.nsw.gov.au/PublicEPropertyPDF/DA211294%20Heritage%20Impact%20Report%20-%20\[A7985332\].pdf](https://propertydevelopment.ssc.nsw.gov.au/PublicEPropertyPDF/DA211294%20Heritage%20Impact%20Report%20-%20[A7985332].pdf)



Note that it is not the original home of Simpson! Note, also, that there are asbestos issues

Of perhaps a more pertinent issue is that there is a home on freehold in Bundeena whose only road access is an easement through the park!



Undercutting of the hard sea walls by wave action and storm surges



We next looked at the retaining walls that were in place to protect Bonnie Vale's picnic and camping areas. The issue became urgent when storms threatened much of the facility and what we were able to see were "temporary" walls that were put in place while permanent, more eco-friendly designs were scoped, put out for discussion with stakeholders and, eventually, built.



This image shows the sand bags and the bags of stone. The latter is uglier but more robust, can be lifted out easily and if there is undercutting, they also sag into place and remain effective.



Impact of the high tides and storm surges



The old layers of asbestos have now been trapped underneath a matting layer and topsoil (sterilised to ensure no weed infestation) placed over the surface and drainage lines have been out in place to trap nutrient before it enters the waterways. The grass is a tough long-lasting couch. Sites are now mapped and car parking spots are designated for each camping spot. At the moment the price for a sea frontage is \$65 per night (plus car entrance fee), for the next layer back it is \$60 and, I believe, the very back ones are \$50 per night. The minimum booking is for three nights which annoyed some campers we spoke to but we later learnt that was a temporary measure while the Service is seeing how well the grass can cope with usage. I am not sure if that was communicated to those who booked but they did say that the online booking system worked well.



We also chatted with the owner of Bundeena Kayaks. We were pleased to see that a small area has been set aside where no motorised craft can go, off the remaining beach of Simpsons

Bay and there may be good news that a more permanent home than a trailer can be found to run this low-impact business³.

That also gave us an excuse to see the boat ramp and how it was operating!



After lengthy submissions and arguments over this facility I think we have got the balance right!

³ <https://www.bundeenakayaks.com.au/>



Roughly six places set aside for car and boat trailer and most boats were small craft



Note that there are still some permissive occupancy shacks at the site



Boating restrictions in Cabbage Tree Creek and Cabbage Tree Basin.

The only restriction is that the area is a 4-knot zone. I have attached an extract from the current NSW Roads and Waterways boating map.

Note that the warning shown regarding no vessels in the swimming zone refers to the area marked with red diagonal stripes on the map which is marked out by yellow special buoys in the water. It does not relate to cabbage tree basin.

It has always been my position that motorised vessels should be excluded from Cabbage Tree Basin and my understanding from my direct involvement with the following groups is they also support that proposition; NPWS SS Branch, SSEC, FoR, Bundeena Maianbar Chamber of Commerce, Bundeena Progress Association. There is almost unanimous support locally, but of course, no-one wants to stir up the recreational fishers.

Also note that Waterways only recommend that boats not anchor in seagrass beds. There is no prohibition on anchoring in sea bed areas except in Little Manly Cove (AFAIK).

Around 2009 NPWS indicated they were in the process of transferring Crown land around Maianbar foreshore to Royal NP. There was a letter from Michael Treanor advising SSC that the transfer was imminent. At the time there was a lot of community response to Council restricting dogs on Deeban Spit and there were requests for more off leash areas NPA made a submission requesting the land be transferred to NPWS due to all the ecological values. The area included Deeban Spit and some intertidal areas at Maianbar. At the moment, this Spit is no longer attached to Bonnie Vale. The waters out of The Basin have carved a new path to the sea, running right next to the shore and creating quite a fast current that has the potential to undercut even the new temporary sea walls.



Our arguments about the ecological values of the Spit remain and as long as it is Crown Land managed by Sutherland Shire Council there is no guarantee that those ecological values will be protected.

Accordingly, we checked out The Basin and the changes to the mangroves!





It will be interesting to see the changes over the years; whether the retreat of mangroves leads to expansion of saltmarshes or whether they return with a vigour.





Recreational boating in The Basin



We checked out the toilets too. Someone had damaged one of the shower bays over the weekend! Staff was already aware of it and had already noted it for repair!





And with that we departed, having spent close to three hours truly getting to understand the site. It was time to leave it for the next generation!

Brian Everingham