



INTERVIEW WITH BABETTE SCOUGALL

MATTHEW:- This is a tape of an interview with Babette Scougall by Matthew Higgins on 16 December 1999 taking place at Babette's home in Canberra for the NPA Oral History Project.

Babette, can I begin by thanking you for making yourself available for this interview and by going to quite some trouble to prepare yourself too with all these notes and work which you have done, and NPA appreciates that. Just before we move on to the actual NPA period, if we can talk briefly about your earlier life. Now, you were born in 1932 in Canberra and you worked mainly in publishing, ANU, AGPS and Department of Capital Territory. Can you tell me whether there were any influences at work then in your life which might have led you to have an interest in the outdoors and bushwalking?

BABETTE:- No, right from the start I was more interested in the outdoors rather than the indoors. My sister was mum's girl and I was dad's girl, and I tagged along with him wherever he went. I was there by his side and it's just continued. I was keen on sports and I suppose during school days that was my outdoor experience. I didn't actually take up bushwalking until my children were all born and I wanted a family activity, so I went to the inaugural meeting of the Family Bushwalkers down at the YMCA in Civic, and we all walked as a family off and on for quite a few years. Then they got through that stage where they didn't want to be seen with mum and that's when I looked for some group that I could walk with on my own without family. So I left the Family Bushwalkers behind at that stage and ended up with the NPA just on a Sunday occasionally.

MATTHEW:- The Family Bushwalkers, that inaugural meeting, that was in the 1960s, was it?

BABETTE:- It was 1964.

MATTHEW:- You also had a interest in photography for quite some time, and did that also sort of lead to your interest in the outdoors?

BABETTE:- Well, dad's interest was photography, the laundry was the darkroom back then as well as now with me. No, I dropped that for a long time because dad's camera was so old fashioned; he passed it on to me but I didn't bother to use it, and once the children started I couldn't afford to get into something as expensive as photography, but I think it was always back there. I bought a camera, a new camera, for myself when I went to America and from that point on I got back into photography. I suppose I was 14-16, something like that, when I first started taking photographs.

MATTHEW:- You have had a number of photographs over the years in the NPA Bulletin.

BABETTE:- Yes, quite.

MATTHEW:- Now, you joined NPA in about 1974 or 75?

BABETTE:- Something like that, I can't think of the exact date.

MATTHEW:- How did you actually come to join?

BABETTE:- Well, I haven't quite worked that one out. I think it was just before I went to America, but I know I was travelling with National Parks people from Queensland and they talked very enthusiastically. I think I was testing the local bushwalking groups before that. I did quite a lot of bushwalking in the Budawangs, especially pack walking, with people from the Botanic Gardens; they were all in the Herbarium going out collecting. It wasn't a sort of A to Z walk, it was duck down every gully and examine every corner which was, it still is, the kind of bushwalking I prefer really.

MATTHEW:- So that was before you joined NPA. Who were some of those people at the Botanic Gardens that you were walking with?



BABETTE:- Ian Telford was one of the botanists, Muriel Rafferty and Irene Gledhill, people like that were there. I don't remember all of the names now.

MATTHEW:- *Were these overnight type trips?*

BABETTE:- The ones into the Budawangs always were because Ian [Telford] was doing research there and I think he became, at that stage, the Budawang so-called expert. He wouldn't like me to use that expression probably. He was just finishing off research and we just tagged along. There were quite a lot of people. Every time I went out with them I met new people and sometimes didn't meet them again. They were great and they introduced me to the type of bushwalking I had not experienced before. Once I joined the NPA I kept that up.

MATTHEW:- *When you say the type of bushwalking you hadn't experienced?*

BABETTE:- Well, overnighting and camping, backpacking; so called lightweight backpacking, just using overhangs and not bothering about tents and things like that. But then they would take big heavy skillions to make wonderful meals as well, but I didn't have to carry those.

MATTHEW:- *It sounds very charming and lots of red wine, I suppose?*

BABETTE:- Quite a few times, yes.

MATTHEW:- *So I think you were mentioning to me the other day, too Babette, one reason also for getting into NPA was the companionship of the group walking?*

BABETTE:- I knew enough about bushwalking to know that if I started taking photographs I'd walk off the track and probably get lost. In fact, I'd been mislaid a couple of times in the Budawangs by then, so I knew it had to be in a group. I just wanted to know new areas and I looked around and I thought the NPA had a very active walks program at that stage. I think I tried the Canberra Bushwalkers for a while, but they didn't really stop for enough camera stops as far as I was concerned. So I just went out on daywalks initially because I had the children at home and mum came over and looked after them. So it was a day a month or something like that, but it gradually got into the packwalking and longer periods of time. The longest one I have ever been on was one of Di Thompson's 10-day pack walks, which was great.

MATTHEW:- *We might talk about that one a little later on when we talk more on outings. Now, you have played a role in the NPA committee. I think you began on the committee perhaps in about 1984, and you were also on the Namadgi sub-committee and I think the environment sub-committee.*

BABETTE:- At that stage we only had a sub-committee. I don't know it even had a name. It was only when everything else crowded out Namadgi, or Gudgenby as it was then, that they decided to break it up into two separate sub-committees and then they were named. If my memory is correct, that's the way it worked out.

MATTHEW:- *What was your role in terms of sub-committee work, can you remember some of the issues you were involved with?*

BABETTE:- Well, just everything that was on the go.

MATTHEW:- *Well, you joined in 1974 and it was in 1984 that Namadgi was finally declared as a national park as opposed to the earlier Gudgenby Nature Reserve. Did you have a role in, say, campaigning for the plan of management and assessing the draft plan of management as it was being developed between 1984 and 1986?*

BABETTE:- Could you turn it off while I ...[this question doesn't seem to have been answered here]

MATTHEW:- *Just making a comment on your approach to the bush at the time you joined the NPA...*



BABETTE:- Well, initially I was just simply walking, having a break from family affairs and along the way listened to people and saw things out there that obviously needed attention and gradually got involved in the conservation issues. While I didn't take an active part in committee work back then, and I'll never be a militant environmentalist, I started to participate more in the other things that were happening within NPA. I think probably I had a stronger interest in the cultural heritage side right from the start; nobody had to introduce me to that part of it. I always delighted in coming to one of the ruins and always asked what it was, who was involved, but nobody seemed to have the answers back then. That part has always been my greatest interest.

MATTHEW:- So, NPA started to get an interest in Orroral Homestead from about 1982 onwards. Apart from that would it be true to say that there wasn't much other interest in cultural heritage in the membership?

BABETTE:- There would be comments like, "what a pity something is falling down" and "where did that fence-line go to", and yes, always questions and conversations, but I don't think anyone was really very active in the cultural heritage side of it. Much later on when I was a member of one of the sub-committees, I did put forward the suggestion that they include cultural heritage as well as the natural heritage in our constitution. That wasn't agreed to at all, in fact, it was fought very hard by certain people who were against the idea. I was very relieved when they finally got around to doing that, only a matter of 2 or 3 years ago.

MATTHEW:- In 1994.

BABETTE:- Yes.

MATTHEW:- You actually joined the Kosciuszko Huts Association out of this interest too?

BABETTE:- Yes, well I heard that, because most of the members of KHA were from Canberra or areas around here, they had started to get more interested in the huts in the Namadgi area that had all started to decline by then. NPA had refused to take on the cultural heritage side, so I thought 'KHA sounds more my people', so I joined them and in that way they certainly were. I stayed on as a member of the NPA at the same time because, well, I was involved with people, I like the group, their walks were good, and I had become involved with the natural heritage more than I expected to by then. There was no other area really going to work for Namadgi or the ACT Territory. I think NSW had more than it could cope with, so a group like NPA ACT had to be the ones responsible for all that was happening in the Territory. That's all there was to it.

MATTHEW:- When you say, NSW had more than it could cope with, you mean the NPA NSW?

BABETTE:- Yes, and we covered a lot of their territories but we couldn't cope with the little bits we were picking up either at that stage. In fact, I don't think we can even now. That's the way it goes.

MATTHEW:- In terms of your time on the committee, are there any general comments you would like to make about the NPA's input into, say, management of Namadgi during those years or any particular management issues that came up in your experience?

BABETTE:- There were quite a few actually; they worked very hard and you know we're all volunteers and I'm full of admiration for the people who give up so much time. Yes, I've been involved in a few submissions and that's always very time consuming. I suppose Gudgenby itself is the biggest one that's still not resolved.

MATTHEW:- That's the grazing controversy?

BABETTE:- Yes. The people who were running Gudgenby were the McLachlans at that stage, as old Mr Bootes had handed it over to his family by then. I think most people who went to the special meeting that was held to discuss whether they should come off it or not, as NPA was preparing a submission for the Department, suggested that it should be left in the hands of the farming



family because they were in their own way conservationists as well, and they were managing a very good property, managing it very well. But the Executive sort of went the other way and put forward, almost as though it was a unanimous decision, that they should come off and that there was no place for any type of grazing within a national park in a very purist type of way that I closely disagreed with. I think it was probably that that triggered my leaving the Executive at that stage. Other decisions were made in much the same way, you could talk your head off and say what you like, but the decision had been made elsewhere. The Executive was walking away from what I saw was most of the members' opinions.

MATTHEW:- And the time that we are talking about is the late 1980s, 1988/89?

BABETTE:- I don't know that I can put a date on it now, it's somewhere about there, yes.

MATTHEW:- Are there any other management issues relating to Namadgi that you would comment on, where NPA had a role to play?

BABETTE:- I think they have taken pretty well every opportunity they could and certainly, I think it was Fiona [Brand] who triggered off the Orroral Homestead saving which became a big project for us. I think it was probably NPA's, not just the initial suggestion, but our persistence that's actually saved that building which is now being promoted for tourism almost by the Department. It would probably be tumbled down, or one end at least would be a tumbled down ruin if we hadn't done it. That hasn't been all good as far as the NPA's concerned. I suppose I ended up wearing two hats about that time, when towards the end Orroral Homestead, as I was also working at the Department and listening to the rangers' and the Heritage Unit's point of view. Do you want a bit of controversy here?

MATTHEW:- Yes, just remembering it's a public tape.

BABETTE:- Well, the Heritage Unit had paid a huge amount of money, \$10-12,000, to have an expert come in and examine all of the wallpapers, layers of wallpaper, paint and the actual plaster on the walls. But while NPA was working - I don't know quite why as I wasn't there that day and, in fact, I've only had two days working with the NPA on Orroral - all of the plaster was removed including all of this heritage stuff that this very expensive report had been done on. It was removed by people who decided it had to be done.

MATTHEW:- Were they NPA members?

BABETTE:- Yes. There were complaints from Jonathan Winston Gregson. When we went out there, we were removing acres of nasty thistles, and another team was digging up the soil looking for a drainage system. He claimed that we also destroyed a lot of archaeological evidence which couldn't be used after that. Then when Pip Giovanelli was given the role of being in charge of the repairs of that homestead, clashes occurred with members of NPA. I was very sick at the time, but I ended up getting up out of a sick bed and going and sitting with my feet in a hole scooping bits of dirt back into the hole just trying to see what was happening, because I was getting so many really bad stories. You know, if the Department pays someone to be boss of that site, even volunteers have to toe the line and it was unfortunate. So the outcome of all of that was the Department decided that they would never again allow volunteers to be used on anything they considered to be important because they couldn't be trusted. I mean it really went beyond what anyone expected, and it's only now that they are short of resources - short of people and short of money to employ people - that volunteers are allowed back into the picture. So, depending on which cap I have got on, my NPA cap or the Departmental one, I think there was as much bad as good we did on the Orroral site, and I don't know that many of us have really learned the lesson there, which is a pity.

MATTHEW:- If we can talk now for a moment about issues elsewhere in the ACT, outside of Namadgi, in other nature reserves, other areas within the Capital Territory, where you were



involved directly or where you would like to comment on NPA's role, for example the Corin Forest Ski proposal that aroused quite a bit of heat within the organisation?

BABETTE:- Well, I wasn't ever involved in that and I don't know that I ever discussed it with NPA. I certainly didn't do it at committee level or anything like that. People in Canberra need outlets, and they are taxpayers too, and they need to be allowed to go somewhere for their recreation. I know a lot of NPA people don't want the road through Namadgi to be sealed so people can go down to the snow. And I saw the Corin Dam issue as somewhere the locals who aren't bushwalkers, who aren't travellers, could actually go and have a bit of outdoor experience. It would take the pressure off the roads to the snow, and I didn't see it as all bad, whereas the others did. I didn't go into the side of how much that creek was going to be spoiled; in fact, I still don't know the end result, if it's as bad as they all claimed. At one stage there, there were some super greens in our midst that were more or less anti everything other than bushwalking and wilderness. If we are going to talk that way we are going to sort of harm NPA's image. As far as I'm concerned we are not a wilderness group. A national park represents the creation for other activities, not just simply preservation of forests and the things that the extremist environmentalists claim. As a National Parks Association we have to represent that side and have our minds open to that, even though we have to keep our eye on it that it's not misused as well. There are just some people within our group that just don't ever allow that other side. I mean, as far as I'm concerned, a lot of national parks are set aside for cultural heritage as much as for the natural heritage. I don't think that's the case in Namadgi although I would like it to be, I think I'd even like to see another bit of cultural heritage included in the park: the Blythburn Cottage which is right next to the border. I would like to see that become the next issue. Anyway, that's the future, sometime down the track.

MATTHEW:- There were other places around the territory where NPA has played a role, Mulligan's Flat?

BABETTE:- I wasn't involved then, in fact, I was just starting to get involved with birdwatching at that stage, and I think I was understanding that side of it a bit more.

MATTHEW:- What about the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and the early Government proposals, say in the early 1980s, of having building development west of the river, how did NPA react to that?

BABETTE:- I think they became alert and some were speaking out against it but, again, I didn't get really involved at that stage. I've sort of been an off-and-on member depending on how busy I've been at work, and so I'm busy and very involved with them for a while, and then I get busy and involved in other places. I haven't really participated in that, I just remember going up to the Department and getting all the maps of the whole of the Territory and being told by a Departmental officer, "Why should we give you maps for your meetings, because you're the people who always write letters in and complain about everything we did". I didn't get the maps that day but they came through the post a couple of days later, so he must have re-thought it. So you know when you are in a Department, there were a couple of times walking down the corridor at work, because I was NPA, certain people didn't sort of want to talk to me because, I think, I represented the enemy, just depending on what sort of letters were being sent into them. So it has made life difficult at times.

MATTHEW:- When you say the Department that was the Department of Capital Territory at that time?

BABETTE:- No, it was the ACT Government, it was the lands area.

MATTHEW:- So that is since self government?

BABETTE:- Yes. I had nothing to do with the Department in the earlier times.



MATTHEW:- Looking at issues that NPA has got involved in outside of the Territory, now in 1983 you were on the Kosciuszko sub-committee and there were a couple of issues there that were noted in the Bulletins certainly, the recreational pressure on the Cave Creek area and illegal grazing, perhaps to do with the 1983 drought, would you like to comment on your memories of those issues?

BABETTE:- I joined the Kosciuszko committee. I could see that Kosciuszko was taking over the whole of our [*environment*] sub-committee. We would talk Kosciuszko issues and probably have ten minutes on Gudgenby, and that's all, and so we thought to separate them would be a good idea. I think I was one of four people on it, but the Kosciuszko sub-committee never really got off the ground. It was my involvement with that and having to deal with that, that probably made me aware of people within the NPA who were more green than I was, and who were pushing for things I really couldn't support. Kosciuszko was our skiing area, it was for people even though it was national park. There were people within the NPA that, if they could have closed the whole thing down, they would have been willing to push for it. And there was no way I was going to join in that.

MATTHEW:- When you say close it down you mean, close it off to the public?

BABETTE:- Yes, I mean there are some extreme views, and that was never likely to happen and I don't think NPA of the ACT would have ever really got around to suggesting it. So I don't think I was the one that dropped away from that Kosciuszko group, I think the person who was actually the convener just stopped being a member of the committee actually, and it all just fell by the wayside.

MATTHEW:- The Kosciuszko sub-committee?

BABETTE:- Yes, so I think there were good intentions and big intentions that just didn't happen.

MATTHEW:- Are there other issues relating to natural areas outside of the ACT that you were involved with, for example, was the NPA very involved during the 1980s we are talking about in, say, the Budawangs or Jervis Bay, or with the wood-chipping down around Eden?

BABETTE:- Den Robin is probably the one who is more involved with the Jervis Bay area. Budawangs, Di [*Thompson*] always had those field trips down there, and I was on a couple of those field trips putting in cheeses and marking tracks and closing off the worn areas and opening up new ones.

MATTHEW:- When you say cheeses, for the uninitiated?

BABETTE:- The wooden blocks you walk on across swampy areas which didn't quite work for some people. Some of them were too small for a large foot and the other people, who were laying them down had longer strides than most people, so you sort of had to hop from one to another. Yes, it was a learning experience for us how to handle those, and I think it was a new name to us back then as well.

MATTHEW:- And which tracks were you working on?

BABETTE:- It was after the Wog-Wog property closed its gates to us and they opened up a new area further along the creek, the Wog-Wog Creek, which is now the carpark and camping area for the start of trips out to Admiration Point and places like that. One particular corner was very heavily eroded after a very short time and that was because of the swampy area, and some of the old tracks right into the area, I've forgotten the name of it now, it's above the Green Hut as we called it [*Corang*], the erosion over the years had dug out the tracks completely. So we had to find new areas there. The NSW National Parks Service dropped in lots of logs and other things for the work so we didn't have heavy loads. I think one trip they had to carry quite a lot of the logs in, but the one I went on the logs were dropped by helicopter.



MATTHEW:- Do you think the NSW Parks Service appreciated what you were doing, or was it a case of here's some volunteers we had better keep them busy sort of thing?

BABETTE:- I don't know who initiated the repairs to the track. I think, we just volunteered our time and they took it up. Again, I think, if you ask Di [Thompson] those details, because I was just one of the members that tagged along and worked with them.

MATTHEW:- Was it your impression that what you were doing there was worthwhile and was appreciated by the NSW Parks Service?

BABETTE:- I think it was worthwhile even though some of the things we did were only temporary. We were taking branches and putting them across the swamp like corduroy they called them going across the wet areas, they would have broken up and disappeared in two or three years. I don't think I ever spoke to a ranger after that or any person from the Parks Service in NSW so I can't really comment on whether they appreciated it. I think they would have though.

MATTHEW:- How many NPA members would there have been on these work parties on average?

BABETTE:- Well Di [Thompson] often talked around the office so there were a lot of people who were not members of NPA. So I'd say perhaps up to 20 people, and half and half NPA and others. Sometimes people would bring their families along too, to make an outing in that way.

MATTHEW:- And these work parties took place in the late 1980s or early 1990s, must have been in the late 1980s?

BABETTE:- I think it would have to be in the late 1980s, because I wouldn't have been able to go after that.

MATTHEW:- We might continue with the work party theme and other work that NPA did in Namadgi. Now we've talked about the Orroral Homestead. Tennent Homestead is more recent, and I realise you probably haven't been involved with that.

*BABETTE:- Well, in fact I was. It was Di [Thompson]. I'd not been walking for quite a while and Di said she had a nice little walk that she would take me out on, it would be 20 minutes and I could do it. So she took me out to Tennent Homestead. She had come across it accidentally on a pack walk; they had come down from somewhere up near Bushfold Flats through the scrub and just accidentally encountered this little homestead. She was fascinated by it. At that stage we didn't even know if it was in the park or outside of the park. I think, one of the rangers even said it was outside, but we finally got the maps and it was inside. So it was Di's interest that triggered that one off as well, and we started asking questions again. There was an attitude towards, I think, cultural heritage generally within the ACT Parks Service at that stage, that if it required time and money and people, then it was best to let it go. Certainly they saw the woolshed itself as something that was dangerous because it was being undermined by the termites, but that hasn't proved to be the truth. The old homestead that was made of rammed earth [*pisé*] is the one that has fallen over and gone and taken another part of the extension, 'Arnie's' extension, with it; that's actually gone. I was working at the Department at that stage and I did ask them about it, and because I wasn't getting good results I decided then to go around all of the non-government organisations to see if they would fund help with the repairs, fund anything. I was thinking in terms of some sort of cover over the *pisé* building which was just so different. It was, I thought, an important part of our cultural heritage.*

*MATTHEW:- And the only *pisé* building in Namadgi National Park.*

*BABETTE:- Well, in fact, I did discover by asking questions that the original homestead out at Westerman's was made of *pisé*.*

MATTHEW:- But the only surviving one.

BABETTE:- Yes, it certainly was. Anyway we tried, but it didn't quite work. There was one sugges-



tion, at one stage, that there was another way of preserving the cultural heritage and that was taking a video of its gradual decline. I haven't been back to the Department to ask if that was done, but I think I know the answer and that is, no it wasn't. Because they need to have these very expensive studies before they do anything to any of these old buildings (some of them I don't think really warrant that sort of money being spent on them initially) there was this delay caused by all of the proposals put forward, and all of the groups involved. We did do a little bit and the Department did its bit by diverting the water into another channel, so water wouldn't come straight down the hill into the homestead and the buildings nearby. But it wasn't enough to save what I consider to be the most important building, even though it wasn't the oldest building. The slab building by the side of it is probably the oldest one and, I think, that is still saveable. But it is not being saved, and I think that's a great shame. I know I have a lot of photographs here and my intention is to put them together and take them to the Department and see if they would do something about it. That's one of my good intentions for the beginning of next year.

MATTHEW:- When you say the Department, you mean, well, it's the Environment ACT now but would have been the Bureau of Arts and Heritage?

BABETTE:- No. Because it was in the national park, it had to be the ACT Parks and Conservation Service who were supposed to be working with the Heritage Section of the ACT Government. I don't know who they come under at the moment, whether it's Land and Planning or what.

MATTHEW:- Well, it's all Environment ACT now.

BABETTE:- OK. Because people within the Department, broadly speaking, just never get out of the urban area, it really is up to people like the NPA to keep them informed, and it's up to us to keep applying the pressure. Unless we do, it's not ever going to be done, not ever going to be saved. I think we now have a lot of rangers who are concerned about the cultural heritage. I've been out on ranger walks recently. A couple of them speak so well on particular subjects when they take you out, they have obviously studied their areas and that's great. Whether they are going to be given time and money to do something other than just simply point out things and talk about it I don't know, but I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful that they have changed their ways. Initially, when I first got involved with the national park, the rangers were being taught everything about the environment but, I think, they were lucky to get one hour a year on the cultural heritage side. That was just so unimportant that the door was never really opened for them. I think someone's making some changes there too.

MATTHEW:- Other work that NPA's undertaken in Namadgi; there was the tree planting project at Glendale in 1983. Were you involved with that at all?

BABETTE:- I went out. That was a Charlie Hill project and, in fact, I think he ought to be one of the people interviewed.

MATTHEW:- He has been interviewed by Fiona [Brand] or Reg [Alder] previously.

BABETTE:- Great, because he's been a really solid member, he's never been a President or anything like that, he's not sort of stepped out in front and taken the leading role. When I was the editor of the *Bulletin* he was my main supporter with the best written articles. He was also an excellent leader as well. We just went out there and dug holes and planted trees and then went back out months later and checked. We always put something around them whether it was simply car tyres or wire as well.

MATTHEW:- To keep animals away?

BABETTE:- To keep the rabbits from biting them while they were growing. I haven't been out there recently, and I don't know that anyone has, perhaps that's something we need to follow up on just to see what and how many are still there. It wasn't just simply that we got the small trees and planted them. I think, people went out in the first place and collected seed and they collected



milk containers from us. Then there was the seed planting group and they looked after the seedlings as they grew until they got big enough to be taken out and planted in the wild.

MATTHEW:- And 1983 was the Year of the Tree so this was to do with that, NPA's way of commemorating that year.

BABETTE:- I think so, but again I wasn't really actively involved in the decision-making there at that stage.

MATTHEW:- And of course, 1983 was the year of the terrible bushfire in Gudgenby and NPA played a role assisting the fire fighters especially with meals. Were you involved in that?

BABETTE:- No, I wasn't involved in that. The only thing I did was as soon as the road was open we went walking there and we were taking photographs of the total destruction in places. You could just sort of see a lizard that had sizzled on a rock and all the ants that had just simply charcoaled but still in their own shape. Yet there were other parts on the top of hills, the tops of ridges or down deep in the gullies, that hadn't been touched. You couldn't really predict where the fire was going to go or wasn't going to go, it was quite amazing. Also, it was my first experience of a bushfire like that, out of control.

MATTHEW:- And how did you and the membership generally feel about that fire and its devastation on this area which NPA had fought so long for, was it something you felt personally for example?

BABETTE:- No. I just took it as part of Australia and what happens in the bush. I don't think anyone started that fire deliberately or anything, did they? It was decided it was accidental, lightning or glass or something like that. I'm still unsure what way to go with fire; the burning regime that they have over in Northern Territory or wherever. We have always had lots of fires and I don't think we can ever prevent fires in national parks. There are some plants in Australia that won't grow unless there has been a fire through, so maybe that's part of our landscape and we just have to accept it. But it was the animals, I suppose I felt for, I mean they couldn't have run away from it; maybe the wombats got into their holes and escaped or maybe they were smoked to death or something. There certainly were not many animals around when we walked through that part of the bush. I think we climbed to the top of Boboyan Hill to sort of get a good look of where it had gone. And as far as bushwalkers are concerned, of course, we were black for months and months and months afterwards walking through it. The face of the land that had been burnt changed because of all of the undergrowth or the ways things came back; the trees started to grow from ground level and all of those new shoots which started to crowd us out, so you were pushing through thickets, whereas before you used to walk through fairly open forest. It has a massive effect on the landscape.

MATTHEW:- Do you think it has started to open up again now, 16 years later?

BABETTE:- I haven't been into those areas enough to really comment.

MATTHEW:- There were other projects that NPA was involved with like the revegetation of the Nursery Swamp fire trail after that 1983 fire. Were you involved in that?

BABETTE:- Yes, there is even an insulting photograph that Reg [Alder] took. I found that an interesting experience; the way they could put the [re-grassing] seeds through some sort of sterilising so that it sort of stabilised the earth and provided a stable environment for the natural seed to get in and root and take over completely. Again, I haven't been back to that area recently, but I believe it's hard to see the track where it was. To have learned how to do that is a good thing, we can apply that same rule in other places.

MATTHEW:- Were those day trips or would you camp out there?

BABETTE:- I'm sure that one was a day trip for me. Quite often some people would make it an



overnight trip because they had vans and things and others would join them, it was probably optional but the walks program would tell us those details.

MATTHEW:- Do you think these sorts of work parties, whether it was at Orroral or on that track or planting the trees at Glendale, do you think they contributed to the camaraderie?

BABETTE:- Always, and also what's important, I think, is it probably provided us with an image for outsiders, it sort of was part of our public face, if you like. I think it's probably good public relations for us to do more of that in fact but, well, we will have to wait for another fire and some more fire trails.

MATTHEW:- Well, there is the pine forest revegetation program?

BABETTE:- I haven't had any involvement in that at all, and I don't know that I'm as against pine plantations as a lot of other NPA members. We need pine trees for our houses and other things, and just because we have got our houses doesn't mean to say other, younger people aren't entitled to have pine trees too. I've been out a number of times with the Canberra Archaeological Society and one of them was with ACT Forests talking about a place out at Uriarra, Sherwood, which they were very proud of. The ACT Forest people spoke for a long time on their policies and what they had been doing. They are proud of the fact that they are the only part of the ACT Government that actually pays it own way, and without pine plantations they couldn't do that. So there is good and bad in all of those groups really, and I don't know that purists really have got the complete picture.

MATTHEW:- Moving on to another area of NPA's work and it's something we've touched on earlier in the interview and that's the outings, the bushwalking side of the organisation. Now, you were convener of the outings program for some time. Which years were they?

BABETTE:- No. I wasn't convener, just a member of the walks committee and I think I was only on it for about a couple of years anyway, so it's not a major part. Well not initially, probably after I'd been walking with NPA for about 5 years, I decided I owed something and I'd been to places with these other people that NPA wasn't going to, so I started to lead walks in the Budawangs and then other places as well. I don't believe I'm a strong leader and I certainly didn't do anything very dangerous or adventurous in any way, and I always got pipped by the males who always liked to take the lead from me. I haven't led for a long time, and I'm not sure that I would go back to it because I don't think I could outpace enough of them to keep to the lead.

MATTHEW:- I guess it's a matter of horses for courses, because you can have gentle walks and if they are advertised as such, then you'll get a certain type of clientele who want that type of walk.

BABETTE:- Well, I thought that too, but my last pack walk into the Budawangs was supposed to be a family walk and to be short walks only. I suppose about 5 strong walkers came and they decided to go off and do their own thing. So the rest of us had to sit by a creek and have a 2-hour lunch, because we didn't know where they were and some of their gear was still with us. We just had to sit and wait for them to come back and that really made me very angry, because it wasn't fair to the other people as the walk was set up for the weaker ones. I don't know how to handle situations like that. I find that I enjoy the bush as a laid-back follower rather than as a leader.

MATTHEW:- Yes, there was a letter from Fiona [Brand] to the newsletter back in 1984 complaining about fast walkers and them not accepting the responsibility that 'the led' also have, just as the leader also has responsibility, and walkers who go off and do their own independent thing make things hard for the leader. You wrote shortly after that agreeing with that.

BABETTE:- Yes, we talked it over quite a lot and I think we just had a number of walkers with us who were doing that too much. What I have found since I've come back to NPA and I've only done a few shortish walks, is that there is a sort of almost a different attitude or maybe I'm just



walking with different people. Before, I used to be up near the front, so I'd know what they were saying there. Now, I'm sort of walking at the back and I'm hearing casual day walkers saying, 'well we can take our time and do as we like because they have to walk at our pace not their pace'. So there is this other attitude from the other end that I'm also not liking now. I just think you have to be responsible to the group and it has to from both ends. I don't know how you make it work that way because there are just some individuals who won't, and that's all there is to it.

MATTHEW:- Would you like to talk about some of your favourite walk locations?

BABETTE:- I think the Budawang has always been my favourite, and I think it's because I ducked in and out of every corner and spent time with people who knew what they were looking at and talking about. I've been doing more non-tours with people who are botanists and really know what they are looking at. You had time to take photographs when you are with people that stop. So I don't think I will ever go back to just walking from A to B nonstop, I think it would always have to be a sort of appreciation walk. But it is also getting harder now as areas keep on getting closed off; you've got further to walk to get in to the interesting places. I don't know what we can do about that, we need a buffer zone to protect really interesting places and preserve them, but I'll just have to leave it up in the air because I don't have a solution. That last big issue that we have had about closing off the road to Mt Gingera is typical. I can't see the point in closing every gate that we can, and extending walks just on the principle that that's the right thing to do. There has to be more thought given to those sort of issues.

MATTHEW:- It's interesting to hear your strong feelings for the Budawang given your strong cultural heritage interests too, because your interest in the Budawang seems to be very oriented towards natural heritage?

BABETTE:- I think it's my escape, it's my escape corner really and I just go in there and relax and I've missed it really so I'll have to get back there soon.

MATTHEW:- Do you think you can put into words what it is about the Budawangs, I mean, the sandstone cliffs, type of dry forest or rainforest gullies?

BABETTE:- There is a quality about it; well, it's just so different from anything in the ACT which is not exactly bland, there are really beautiful corners, but you have to get in to see little bits here and there. The Budawang has an impact and, I think, there are corners in it that are very Aboriginal. There is an emotive quality in the Budawangs when you sort of take time and investigate it. I think its Aboriginal history hasn't been written up, but that would be a really worthwhile project if someone would take it on. And just to sort of clamber around those little corners and find where they have left their little traces in the rocks is something perhaps we ought to do something about. Some of the old things that I have read, old papers, there is apparently trees up the Clyde River, right up into the Sassafras area, where they left behind some carvings on trees and things like that. I believe there are some caves with hand paintings which have been hidden, more or less closed off, to preserve it. So there is a lot more there than is on the surface, really.

MATTHEW:- I know you have been out of the walking scene for a few years as far as being a participant, but you would have seen the outings program nonetheless in the Bulletin. Do you think there has been any discernable change in the nature of NPA walks since you joined in the 1970s?

BABETTE:- We used to have some really interesting car camps with good hosts, and they were always very enjoyable and there was a good camaraderie. There was just a wider choice of the type of walks than there is now, and I don't know why the change has taken place, because all of those old places are still there. Maybe we have to go back and revive some old ones.

MATTHEW:- When you say the car camps with congenial hosts, who are some of those hosts?

BABETTE:- The Curries and the Hills. We used to go to Edrom Lodge and I think the Hegertys



organised those.

MATTHEW:- Down near Eden?

BABETTE:- Yes, although we had a bit of a clash with the forestry people down there the last time we went. I remember the last time we went, the ships were in taking onboard all of the wood-chips. The whole of Edrom Lodge shook from 8 o'clock in the evening right through till the following morning, and then we thought, thank goodness it's stopped. So it stopped for half an hour and then another container ship moved in, and it had to be filled and this throbbing, this beating of the motors, was quite horrific and yet it was so far away. So people over in Eden must have suffered from the sound of that going across the water. Yes that was another big issue the wood-chips and, I think, this is where I can sort of go along wholeheartedly with the green movement. I think it's a very bad thing what they have done down there and extending it further when there is so little gain for Australia from it, it's ridiculous.

MATTHEW:- Going on then to another aspect of your time with NPA, now you became Bulletin editor, I think about 1984 or somewhere around there, took over from Reg Alder in 1984?

BABETTE:- 1985/86 I was with that.

MATTHEW:- Would you like to comment on why you took on the Bulletin and what sort of changes you introduced, both the look of it and the way it was being produced?

BABETTE:- Well, a *Bulletin* sub-committee was formed before I became an editor. Sheila Kruse and Den Robin and someone else was on it. I think a few people were concerned it was becoming very heavy and grey. I know Reg [Alder] had good intentions, he wanted to get some committee news and information out to the members, and so he included all of the letters to and from the committee, which meant packing it in and it became very grey because the lettering was so close together. I just think Reg is a very efficient engineer, but hasn't quite got the idea of the design side of it. He had also taken on the annual report. He really did an awful lot of work and many long hours. I think at one stage he had his glasses changed and he wasn't sort of seeing lines straight at that stage, so he asked me to paste in what he was doing for the *Bulletin* and I more or less became his 'glue' girl, I just sort of stuck it down where he said and when he said. From there I sort of inched in to being the editor. But I felt it was just an overload for one person to do absolutely everything on a journal of that size, 20 pages every quarter, as a volunteer in your spare time. So, my first intention was to simply lighten the load, and I handed back the annual report to executive committee where I believed it belonged. And I still do. Then I started to look for help because I thought I'll never be able to get rid of it. The sub-committee thought that they would never find a replacement for Reg as it became such a heavy load and nobody wanted to know about it. Reg had kept going for a long time with it. I started working getting people to come in and help me. There were some times people would just simply be my runner and just pick up, deliver and bring back, and so forth.

MATTHEW:- This is contributions, photos and stuff?

BABETTE:- Anything that I wasn't able to fit in after my work hours; they would be doing that during the day, the photos, the proof reading, anything and everything like that. So after I had done it for about a year I sat down and worked it into separated work areas, what I considered to be bite-sized bits. I decided the design part, someone actually doing the layout, could be separated, and someone do it while I was editing other parts and getting things together. Other people could be looking around for people to do the writing and pick up those rough copies, anything that was to be provided including photographs. Little by little, by the time I was ready to leave I had a team set up, and then Margus Karilaid came in and he worked with the same group of people that I had left behind, and it was working well. There was another lady Judith [Simondson] who also worked with that system. I think Phil Gatenby was ready to take on the position of editor using the same people when that particular committee decided they would hand it over to



Roger Green of 'Green Words'.

MATTHEW:- Not to hand it over so much, to put it out to tender and he was selected.

BABETTE:- Yes, and he has done a good job and he was also a NPA member, I think. I think, it also helped him get started in a business as well, so good on him. But I think doing that has sort of distanced the members from the *Bulletin*; there is not a strong feeling about receiving a *Bulletin* because the participation is not there as it was.

MATTHEW:- Well, it's changed again with Syd Comfort now being the convener.

BABETTE:- It is coming back around. For a long time I know a number of us didn't read the *Bulletin* for a while which, I know, is slightly insulting to Roger [Green] but that was nothing to do with Roger and what he was doing. So, yes, the *Bulletin* has had a funny road.

MATTHEW:- To what extent did you enjoy working on the Bulletin, and what do you think you achieved through it?

BABETTE:- Well, I was overwhelmed with the first issue, because I had to do both the Annual Report and the *Bulletin* entirely on my own then. But after I sort of handed back the Annual Report and split the work up, it made my load a little bit lighter, and especially once I started working with a group that would help me with the layout and do some of the errands when I was at work. I like publishing as a team and that's why I don't like working in publishing with the computerised version that's operating now. I suppose my intention was to do what the committee wanted, which was to open up and make it a little lighter in looks as well as content. I think, I also introduced shortened versions of what the sub-committees were doing, so that members would be informed a little bit about just general activities which some of them probably weren't concerned about anyway. I think, what I did was to make the editor's role a workable one so that when I handed it over it was much lighter weight, and the group was there waiting for a new editor. The new editor sort of just had to step into that leadership role with the others still working at it. I think the *Bulletin* could have fallen flat on its face if that hadn't been done, because it had become too onerous a job for one person. It didn't last that way for long, as I said, so whether I did much good or not is up to others to say really.

MATTHEW:- Now another publishing project that you were involved with was the 1983 publication, the Field Guide to Native Trees of the ACT, what was your role in that and can you describe for me how that was produced?

BABETTE:- Well, again I was just sort of drawn in onto a committee. Sheila Kruse was the leader of that project and coordinated everyone's work there. We had to find some writers, some botanists to work on it, and a few people that we knew were not willing to do that. We finally found Peter Ormay, John Hook and

MATTHEW:- Was George Chippendale involved?

BABETTE:- No, he was asked, but wasn't willing to be. Laurie Adams must be the third one. The difficult part for us was to get the three very different men to write in the same style for the one book, which was necessary. So we have got some entries that are very short and crisp and others that are rather longer and rather more flowing. I don't know that many other people would notice that difference, but that was our biggest tussle. Because I was working in publishing, Sheila always rang me up and asked me what to do, so I suppose I was the adviser as much as anything. When it came to the nitty-gritty of putting it all together, proof-reading and everything like that, I know Sheila and I gave up many car camps or bushwalks for a long weekend in October and the whole of one Easter. It was a massive operation, and I don't think people really realised how big a job it was going to be. It was going to be initially all volunteers, but then we got a grant so we were able to employ someone to do the map, someone to do the illustrations and also the graphic design. We got a graphic designer from outside, all of which lightened our load



considerably. I don't think it would have appeared so early if it hadn't have been for the help of those people. I think we were all very proud of it, although I have heard some members saying it's just a little pocket book.

MATTHEW:- Well, it is a field guide.

BABETTE:- It's hundreds of hours of work which they really don't recognise. Then of course in 1990, we did the second edition which wasn't quite as good a quality as the first one, because we used the same illustrations without going back to the original illustrations, we just sort of reproduced them from a copy of the original edition.

MATTHEW:- Where they had already been scanned, and so they were re-scanned were they?

BABETTE:- There was no scanning for the illustrations, but they were just faded, some of the lines have disappeared in the second one so you have lost a lot of detail. I think if we ever do that book again, it needs to be done from scratch, really, because there are a lot of changes to be done still.

MATTHEW:- So, do you think that was an achievement for NPA?

BABETTE:- I think probably it helped its image and put it on the local map. We were only going to publish for members and it was going to be a smaller simpler book, but then when it became a saleable product I think we sold 5,000 in the first

MATTHEW:- It sold well?

BABETTE:- It sold very well and it kept on selling. I think we managed to get it out just before Christmas, and it was a nice size and nice price for a Christmas present. That sort of thing wasn't available in Canberra at that stage; there weren't many field guides anywhere, so we hit the market at the right time.

MATTHEW:- I remember when the bird field guide was published by NPA in 1993. It came out just before Christmas too and was in Dymocks' [Booksellers] top ten list, so it did very well, so NPA has got a record of this sort of achievement.

BABETTE:- I think anything that's in the publishing line that goes out to the public is just good public relations. I don't know whether we got any members out of that, but I'd like to think we did.

MATTHEW:- So this is something which has not only assisted NPA members, but it's been to the benefit of the Canberra community?

BABETTE:- I'm sure.

MATTHEW:- Another book which came out earlier, but after the time that you joined, was Rambles Around Canberra.

BABETTE:- I didn't have anything to do with that one, but I bought it and used it. Yes, that was a good one too.

MATTHEW:- Was that a big event for NPA, do you recall in that case in 1978?

BABETTE:- No idea. No, I am not aware.

MATTHEW:- The tree guide, that was launched by Tom Uren, wasn't it?

BABETTE:- I was overseas when it happened. There was also an unhappy occurrence there too, because the girl who did the illustrations, didn't charge us very much at all for the amount of time she put in (she was from Cootamundra, I think), and she invited all her family because it was the first book that she had done the whole illustrations on. She arrived with her parents and sister and waited for an introduction that didn't come, so she was most unhappy about it. I had one of the books posted to me overseas. I think I was in Italy at that stage, and that's all I know



about it. I heard that the lass said she would never do anything for NPA again, because of the way she was treated. So, I think the people who actually launched it hadn't much experience in book launching. In fact, because you recognise everyone and invite people who were involved in creating it and they have to be right to the fore; but that's the way it happened.

MATTHEW:- Now, the general meetings of the organisation every month, would you like to make any comment on the nature of those meetings during the time that you have been a member and whether they have changed at all, either in their format or the sorts of speakers that NPA gets along? Has there been a noticeable change in your time?

BABETTE:- I'd have to check back though the lists. I know that there are some members who don't want to hear what's been discussed during the month and don't want to participate in any of the committee work. I know Clive [Hurlstone] is presently being criticised for going through the minutes reading them out and taking up time. I think that's essential, it gives members an opportunity to join in, which they have to be given. I don't see that the monthly meetings should be just light entertainment and amusing slide talks and things like that. I prefer to see them not heavy and dull but something with a bit of substance, which the people who are organising the talks have certainly tried to make them like that. Some are good and some are not as good, which is the way it always is for everyone. As for differences, I think they have always tried to make or link them to some issue we have got at the moment. I have only ever arranged for one speaker to come, and he was a man who was living in Bungendore, an ex-forestry worker who was now talking very much against the way the forestry are working and very much against wood-chips. So when I asked for a forestry worker, a lot of our green members wouldn't even turn up to that meeting, but in fact he was talking for our movement, very much a conservationist who had all of this inside information about how the forestry works. So there can be some surprises in those talks. But the differences, no I haven't been to enough recently, really, to get the hang of what is happening at the moment. It has been an area where people have to work very hard to find people willing to talk. And sometimes somebody's been called away and they have to find someone at the drop of a hat. That's really very hard. I think they have done very well.

MATTHEW:- The more social side of the Association's get-togethers, for example the Christmas Party and the President's barbeque, now that's a new one on me because they haven't been on in my time in the 1990s; do you remember President's barbeque?

BABETTE:- Right, we always used to have one. It was like a mid-year barbeque and quite often we would have them out at Uriarra or amongst the pine trees, which was a surprise. I think the President's barbeque was an early well-established thing. I didn't realise it had been dropped, so that tells you how often I've been recently.

MATTHEW:- Was that held in the middle of the year to sort of offset Christmas at the end of the year?

BABETTE:- Yes, it was always away from Christmas and has to be winter time if it's away from Christmas here. They always had a good turn-up at them. I think people like those social events and I think we will have to have more of them if we don't have car camps, really, to keep the group going.

MATTHEW:- So, the organisation in your opinion needs this sort of social core to it to keep the cohesiveness?

BABETTE:- I think so, you can do that by combining both walks and car camps and getting together like that. They have always been popular. I think that's been our mainstay. In the really early days, I believe, and this was before I went, they started off with appreciation walks. I think Nancy Burbidge was the one responsible for that so she would lead people around and talk about everything they saw, so it was educational as well. I think the walks were slow enough for even children to keep up, and older people as well, and maybe we have to try re-introducing some of



those. I think everything's worth a try because, I think, our walks program isn't as appealing as say the Family Bushwalkers' is now. You know how groups seem to come and go and they go into slumps. When I left the Family Bushwalkers they were in a real slump. I thought they were going to stop operating at one stage, but they have come back again and they are very strong. We have also got the very strong competition of 'Walking for Pleasure' although I always call them walking for fitness because it's a two-hour route march wherever you go with them. That's what we must not do.

MATTHEW:- The public events that NPA has participated in over the years such as Heritage Week and, more recently, ACT Alive, during the 1980s, the period when you were most active say, at committee level or in the organisation more widely as well, was NPA achieving much of a profile at those sorts of events?

BABETTE:- Well, we were always asked to attend and we always had a big display. My only real participation there was to supply photographs, colour transparencies when Les Pyke was organising those exhibitions. I never actually worked at the counter, and I wasn't there to see the community's reaction to it. The few times that I have been to ACT Alive the NPA tent has always been, well, not filled with people but there has always been people there picking up membership forms and things like that, so I think it's been good and I think it's also something we have to keep going with. I think perhaps what they are doing now at the Visitors Centre, I suppose the rangers have initiated that, all of the talks by people from NPA and Reg's [Alder] wonderful photographs out there, that's going to help NPA's image as well; any of those sort of things.

MATTHEW:- Just before we finish, a couple of questions I don't think I asked you earlier on. You were a member of the organisation before Gudgenby Nature Reserve was declared, and then of course in 1984, Namadgi National Park itself was declared. What was your own personal feeling and the feeling of the organisation when both of those fairly momentous occurrences took place?

BABETTE:- I saw the declaration of the Gudgenby Nature Reserve as a bigger event than it being moved into a higher category, if you like. I know everyone was very excited at that stage, but because I hadn't participated in the very early years their excitement swept over me as I wasn't quite in that same league with them. Then people started to get worried about how well it being just a nature park would preserve it from being altered in any way, and they felt a national park listing would be much stronger. So there was this pressure to get it established as a national park, a full national park. But I don't know that that's made that much difference, I don't know that that has helped us at all really. In fact it just seems to be going along in the same way; there is the same plan of management as the old plan of management. I can't remember any great excitement for the declaration of the national park. I could hear it in Fiona [Brand], for instance, who was part of it right from the very beginning. Finally they had achieved what they had set out to do, which must have been wonderful for them.

MATTHEW:- Was there any commemoration of either event by NPA, was there any celebration as such in either 1979 or 1984 that you recall?

BABETTE:- I can't recall any, but I'm sure there was. No, you would have to ask someone else about that.

MATTHEW:- Perhaps just a more convivial than usual general meeting?

BABETTE:- Could have been. I remember we had a cake down by the [NPA] office in Acton, in Kingsley Street, one time, but I can't remember what that was about. That may have been it.

MATTHEW:- We are near the end of the questions that I had in mind. One point you made to me the other week was the membership of NPA and changes in membership of NPA over the years. You made the comment how it had an academic membership, would you like to expand upon that for me now?



BABETTE:- I think it was a very serious group with serious intentions, and they needed people with real expertise to establish what plants were there, the geology, everything about the area that they wanted to have as a national park. Most of those people were still around when I first joined, but little by little they have drifted off. For a while it just looked like another walking group, a bushwalking group, especially when we had a very active walks program. There was just a small number of people who would be really active on committee work, whereas the majority would lead walks and participate in that way. I was one of them as well, I might add. Not all of them did become active in the political side of it, the committee side of it. Fewer people are available now, and those who have been active are now much older and not willing to go on the committees in the same way. I see NPA on a slight downhill now, and I think our numbers are decreasing with each year. Something has to change, and I think it's time for us to, sort of, remodel ourselves for the next century. Leave some things behind and perhaps take on some other newer ideas that perhaps other groups have used successfully, I don't know what. One of the things, I think, has to be done is to introduce family outings and get younger people. I think if you want younger people you have to open it up to children as well, because they've got young families and, I suppose as their children grow up then they will have time to work on committees. The way things are going we are just going to run out of people, we almost have already in fact.

MATTHEW:- Looking at both sides of the organisation's activity, on one hand a conservation advocate and on the other a bushwalking group; do you think those two activities not just as run by the NPA but in society generally have advanced very much, say from the time you joined in the mid-1970s? Is it a happier world in those two areas, do you think in this region today?

BABETTE:- Happier, I think. They have contributed to the community a lot and we certainly wouldn't have all of the reserves and parks that we have got if people hadn't got active. For NPA of the ACT, I think we have got so much of the ACT we have to work hard to hang on to it and perhaps take it in our stride that parts of it are for recreation and open parts up so we don't lose the lot, despite resisting any change. I don't know how many other parts of the world conservationists can keep claiming and taking back, and then I hear about people clearfelling trees and I sort of get back on the conservation band-wagon. So I'm sort of to-ing and fro-ing a lot myself at the moment. But I think NPA can be very proud of what it's done, and I think they have contributed a lot to the ACT. I don't know which way it is going to go now, what it's going to do, I know there have been a couple of people suggesting we've achieved what we set out to achieve, a national park for the national capital, we may as well let it all go now, but I think now's our important time. At one stage volunteers weren't really welcome and weren't really listened to. You had to hammer hard to get your message home, but now all quarters of all governments are short of people and resources so they have to rely on volunteers. So this could be the time we could do the most for the national park that we've got, and other parks as well. I'm not sure what I'm saying.

MATTHEW:- No, this is just a reflective question and it's interesting to hear your views on where we have come really. For example, it was interesting to read in early issues of the newsletter that it was OK to burn, bash and bury, you know, tin cans and things, not aluminium ones because they wouldn't rust away and, of course, today you wouldn't leave anything out there so that is one way in which the philosophy of bushwalking and environmental impact awareness has changed.

BABETTE:- The thing that they are leading into now is to stop any type of campfire and to me going out camping, a campfire draws everyone together and you can't do it around a candle really. So I'm sort of waivering there as well. I'd hate to see the campfires go, but I know there are times when you absolutely can't have them. I know I'd reached the stage when I was pack-walking, if anyone said 'no campfire', I just simply didn't go on those trips because I just didn't like the attitude, the dictatorial attitude. They haven't won me over on that point yet, but it's not too far away, I think.



MATTHEW:- *Alright. Well, we are at the end of my questions, are there any further points you would like to make, are there any areas in your notes that we haven't covered?*

BABETTE:- I did do quite a lot about acquiring the original NPA office in Kingsley Street.

MATTHEW:- *Yes, we haven't covered that.*

BABETTE:- I was a member at Photo Access and I was working in the University at that stage and I knew the Department, I forget which one it was, it was, perhaps 'Interior', wanted to put up a multi-carpark where Turner Hostel was. I knew the University didn't want that because it was just too close to their buildings. So they wanted all of Turner Hostel to be occupied by somebody. They had the majority, about two thirds of that site. So I got the kitchen for Photo Access and then I was able to get an extra room for the NPA, as they hadn't had an office at that stage. The University was very generous to NPA, they provided them with one of their own phone lines which became quite a difficult thing not many years down the track and I think they paid for our phone calls and our electricity, I suspect by mistake, for some time. So I was a bit disappointed when the Executive Committee decided simply to move out of that area, that it wasn't good enough for them. I felt very strongly that the NPA belonged next to the Environment Centre and Conservation Council, even though we hadn't made any effort to really join with them very much, I mean individual members did, but as a group we didn't and I thought that we were lacking in initiative there.

MATTHEW:- *And when would it have been roughly that NPA got that office in that ROCKS area?*

BABETTE:- Well, I left the University in 1985 so it had to be before then, so I'd say the early 1980s. I think also, once they establish something better in the ROCKS area, I think NPA could have difficulty getting back into it to be with the other environmental groups, and that's basically still where I think we belong. To have them all in a row, COG, everyone, Field Naturalists, whatever, would be wonderful, so again we just have to wait and see what happens down the track. I think Syd Comfort is our representative on the ROCKS committee, so he would be able to tell you more about that.

MATTHEW:- *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

BABETTE:- I don't think so, I think I've chatted on too long now.

MATTHEW:- *Well, you made a comment earlier about Brayshaw's Hut and the work that NPA did that was later able to be put into practice by KHA?*

BABETTE:- Well, I think Reg [Alder] was also busy with this. We were using the NPA mostly with photographs with long captions, and things like that, to show that that area of the ACT had a very interesting history and it was disappearing fast.

MATTHEW:- *So this was in the Bulletin?*

BABETTE:- Yes, and you can actually trace the decline of all of our cultural heritage of that area in the *Bulletin*. One of the things that I did was take a whole lot of photographs of Brayshaws and write up what I knew about it. It was very hard to find any information about that area anyway. Then, 6 months later, I put in another one to show how much more it had declined in that short space of time because the elements up there are pretty savage. KHA have used what we wrote in the *Bulletin* and they have also contacted me and asked for original photographs. That is one of the things I have to do over Christmas, get all my back copies of all of those black and white photographs to KHA to make a record of the earlier days. So *NPA Bulletin* has been used in that way by other people.

Even my article on the willows; I told you about Fiona [Brand] giving her point of view about willows and sitting on the fence. Then Tim Walsh said 'well, I'll write something anti willows' and I said 'I'd write pro willows' because we were also trying to get the *Bulletin* to be used as a forum



for debate. And we thought if we put in a lot of conflicting ideas, then someone surely would come out of the membership group and answer, but no one did. The National Trust did pick up my pro willow talk and repeated it in their magazine. So I think there are other groups who read it. And certainly the rangers do, I know that for certain.

MATTHEW:- Shall we leave it there?

BABETTE:- Thank you, yes.

MATTHEW:- Thanks very much for your time today.