

Linda and Roger's Bunhybee Grasslands

This Property Brochure is at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/PropBrochure.html> / .pdf

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Geography

Bunhybee Grasslands is a 49 hectare / 120 acre conservation property, located 35km south of Braidwood, in southern NSW, within the Palerang Council area. It is just on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range, in a side-valley of the Shoalhaven River basin. The valley largely comprises well-maintained pasture, and many of the creeklines have been re-vegetated.



Some areas are still timbered, particularly the higher elevations along the main range. The average annual rainfall on top of the range appears to be about 1,000mm (40in). On the property itself, it is c. 750mm (30in), but during the long drought 2000-09 the average was 580mm (23in) – 77% of the long-term average. The region is very windy and hence has a high evaporation-rate.

The property is an off-set rectangle, 1.4 km north-south and 400m east-west. A road runs along the western (downhill) side. The northern edge is forested, as is the northern third of the eastern edge. The middle-third is adjacent to a small, lightly-grazed property. A partner conservation property, Parlour Grasslands, lies to the south, and to the east of the southern third. The property lies at 710-760m, part-way down the western-facing slope from Bunhybee Peak (946m) towards Jerrabattgulla Creek at 670m.

Further detail and maps are at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/DistrictGeography.html>.

History of the District

The area was first occupied by the Yuin Aboriginal people, probably the Dhurga, Dyiringanj and/or Djiringanj. The Braidwood area was 'discovered' in 1822, recognised as good pasture-land, and rapidly settled. Following interaction between indigenous people and the early settlers, massive depopulation occurred by 1850, primarily due to white men's diseases. The colonial 'limits of settlement' until the 1840s were only 30km south. There was a gold rush 20km NE at Major's Creek 1851-1870. Control by the authorities remained challenging through to the late 1800s.

The area has seen only limited agriculture, but a continuous history of successful grazing. It used to be mostly sheep with some cattle, but since the 1970s it's mostly cattle with some sheep. Irish names were prominent from the beginning, and several family-names are still in the district.

The area has always been lightly-populated. One hall and one small church are nearby. The couple of small primary schools were gone by the end of the 1950s. The nearest towns are small – Braidwood (35km north, population c. 1200), Major's Creek (20km NE, 125), Araluen (20km E, but 45km by road, 250) and Captain's Flat (30km NW, 500). Along the mostly unsealed road to the south, the next small town is Numeralla, 80km away, population 50, then another 25km to Cooma (10,000).

The name 'Bunhybee' derives from the Peak adjacent to the property. It can be pronounced '*Bunny-Bee', but a local authority says 'Bun*WhyBee'. It would be nice to find a local linguist who can clarify the possible pronunciation in Walbunja / Dhurga / Djiringanj, and what the term might have alluded to.

Further detail is at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/DistrictHistory.html>.

History of the Property

A property 3.5km north was the subject of a land grant in 1828, and most of the area appears to have been granted, purchased or leased by the early 1840s.

Constructing a history of the property is challenging. Our working hypotheses are as follows:

- before the era of the white man, the block was at a transition-point between open snow gum woodland on the lower slopes and denser mixed eucalypt forest on the higher sections, possibly with areas of open grassland, particularly on the lower and mid-levels

- what is now Bunhybee became private property during the flurry of grants and sales between 1827 and 1843 (but it's possible it was later, even as late as the 1870s)
- it was cleared not before 1840, and perhaps as late as 1870-1900
- it was part of a large grazing property until 2004, which changed shape and size a few times
- it was grazed throughout its life since it was cleared, until acquired for subdivision in 2004
- it was only ever lightly grazed, because of the limited water-flows across it
- for these reasons it was never 'improved' (i.e. subjected to superphosphate and seeding with non-native grasses and clovers), so native species held out against blow-in exotics

Further detail is at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/PropertyHistory.html>.

The Grasses and Forbs



The vegetation is mostly open grassland, but with snow-gum re-growth along the lower levels adjacent to the road. Much of the grassland is relatively dry (Themeda dominant, but rich in forbs), with some frequently-moist waterlines (Poa lab. dominant, with limited diversity). There are some rocky areas, and a north-facing slope that has different characteristics due to both the warmth and the presumed long-term use as a sheep-camp. There are aquatic plants in one medium-sized dam, one small dam and the cascades of semi-permanent water-holes along the two main waterlines.

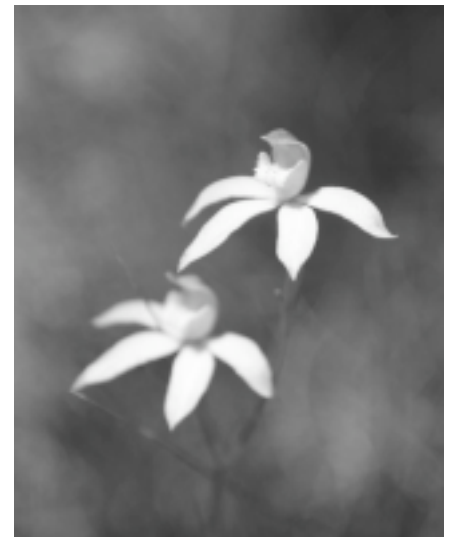
As a result of clearance combined with the absence of improvement, there is enormous diversity of native species and relatively limited incursions by exotic grasses, forbs and shrubs. The grassland is dominated by Themeda, Stipa and Poa species, with Austrodanthonia and Dichelachne as minor components.

There is a rich diversity of forbs, with large patches of *Pultenaea subspicata*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* and *Leptorhynchus squamatus*. On the ridges between the two chains-of-ponds are *Leptospermum* and *Kunzia parvifolium*. Snowgums edge the road. The grassland blends into a native forest on the northern boundary.

Exotics have made incursions. The blackberries, serrated tussock, thistles, briar rose and fleabane were brought under control during 2009-11. Several exotic grasses continue to present serious challenges (especially Yorkshire Fog, *Paspalum* and *Phalaris*). Various other weeds present little threat (e.g. dandelions, flat-weed, oxalis, centaury, proliferous pink, sorrel).

Further detail is available on the native species, as follows:

- the c. 50 Grass species, at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/PS-G.html>
- the c. 140 Flowering Plant species, at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/PS-FP.html>
- the c. 35 Tree & Shrub species, at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/PS-T&S.html>



Conservation

Linda bought the property specifically for its conservation value. The funds and the motivation came from her father, who was instrumental in protecting some of the Dorrigo escarpment long enough for national parks to be invented. Further detail is at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/LS.html>.

The property is subject to a Conservation Agreement, which obligates Linda and future owners to conserve the diversity of native flora. Converting that vague objective into an action plan presents interesting challenges. Left alone, the forbs would be squeezed out by grasses, and by shade from proliferating snow-gums; and hence diversity would be lost. Further detail about our Weed Control program is at <http://www.rogerclarke.com/Bunhybee/WCI.html>.