



Recreation

For generations, the Wollie Creek Valley has been a popular place for recreation. The walking tracks have easy grades and there is open space for children's play.



Walkers on track near Girrahween Park
Photo D. Little

Picnic at Cooks River, Undercliffe, early 1900's
Photo courtesy City of Canterbury Library

Beetle
Illustration J. Martin

At the turn of the 20th century, Cooks River was the venue for many weekend picnic parties. A boatshed, hotel, shops and a swimming hole at Undercliffe Bridge attracted crowds. The late Jean Young recalled Undercliffe in the early 1920s.

'Crowds of people used to leave the tram when it terminated at Undercliffe and come over to the Valley with their billycans and collect blackberries... Further up the creek was a deep hole, bordered by flat rocks, where fishing and swimming by local youths was popular.'

When I moved to Earlwood, I couldn't believe my luck. Along Wollie Creek, so close to the crowded inner west, is a wonderful strip of bushland. I love to disappear into the little bush track... Walking through the trees, I feel like I've left the city far behind. What a magical place!

Laura Zusters, Earlwood Resident

By tranquil waters, Sydney Long (1894)
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales © Estate of Sydney Long. Courtesy Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia photograph: Mim Stirling
Kayakers on Wollie Creek Photo V. O'Brien
Twin Valley Trail marker Photo D. Bassett

In 1892, Sydney Long painted an idyllic scene, *By tranquil waters*, of a group of youths skinny-dipping at the junction of Wollie Creek and Cooks River. Not all residents appreciated these bathing parties.

To the Editor, Sydney Morning Herald:

Sir, I have often heard it said that it is impossible to take ladies down to Cooks River on Saturday afternoons and holidays. Last Saturday afternoon there was abundant evidence that this is the case. From 'Sharkey's Corner' to Tempe there could be counted 30 to 40 men and boys openly bathing in perfectly nude state, some standing on projecting rocks without the slightest show of concealment. This is a state of things calling for summary treatment, and should not be allowed to continue. A few convictions would have a magical effect. Something should be done to make this pretty little river bearable in the summer time, and I trust the matter will be taken up.
5 January 1891, Petersham.

Upstream of this popular bathing spot in Wollie Creek, conditions were not so idyllic. Reports show that the waters of Wollie Creek were heavily polluted by noxious trades and that *'ladies and gentlemen rushed to put their windows up when they reached Tempe Station, in order to shut out the smell'*.

Recreation today

Fortunately conditions have improved. Today the Wollie Creek Valley is used by school groups and people of all ages. Bush walking, bird watching, photography, kayaking, informal games and walking the dog are all popular. There have never been any formal sports grounds in the valley and a Regional Park survey confirmed that people wanted the park preserved as a natural area for passive recreation.

People can now take a 13 kilometre walk, called the **Two Valley Trail**, along the bush track through the Wollie Creek Valley from Bexley North to Tempe and then along the Cooks River to Campsie. The walk takes you along a green corridor of eucalypt forests, heath land, riparian zones and mangroves.

WCPS and other local environment groups worked with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Local Councils and the Sydney Catchment Management Authority to create this unique walking trail.