Ivan Binns

NATURE NOTES

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1969

Photo W. H. KING

BOOBOOK OWL (Ninox boobook)

PRIZE LETTER

Congratulations go this month to Jenny Garden, Age 9 of Grade 4B, S.S. Eastwood. Most people shudder at the thought of rats i.e. the introduced variety. Many forget that we have our own water rat. Jenny tells about this mammal and wins another of the Periwinkle series from Landsdowne Press, this time "Australian Sea Shells" by John Child - a neat compact volume, which contains many full and half page colour and black and white illustrations and sketches. Topics covered include Gastropoda, Molluscs, Pelecypoda, Chitons and Cephalopoda - an excellent book for your library.

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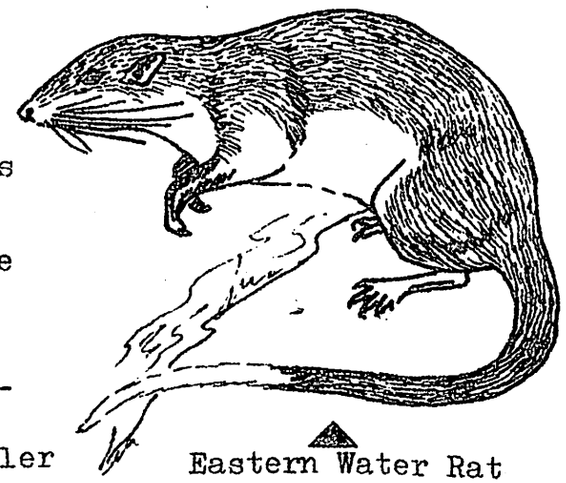
During the May holidays I went to Stawell. One day we went for a picnic to the "Green Hole" which is on a creek. We decided to go for a stroll along the bank. Suddenly Mummy spotted an animal swimming in the water. We waited till it dived then moved closer. When it surfaced we saw it was a water rat and were able to move to within two yards of it. It had a white-tipped tail, brownish black oily fur and a bronze coloured chest. It was about twenty inches long. As soon as my brother moved it disappeared under-water.

Sketch: G. Hensler

● The Eastern Water Rat is a native Australian Mammal. It eats mussels and yabbies and lives in a hole in the bank. The Water Rat dives and swims beautifully. These animals are protected.



Eastern Water Rat

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Produced by the Nature Notes Committee of Ringwood Inspectorate.

From the Editor ...

Dear Girls and Boys,

I hope that our magazine is helping you better to appreciate plant and animal life around you, and to understand some of the purposes and ways of nature.

In nature there is much that please our senses. Delicate flowers, lovely shrubs, beautiful plumages, dancing birds and gaily-hued butterflies all delight our eyes; whistling and tuneful sounds so often charm our ears; sweet scents rise from forest and shrubbery. There are delicacy and charm in nature, also majesty and power. All this you will discover as you become more observant.

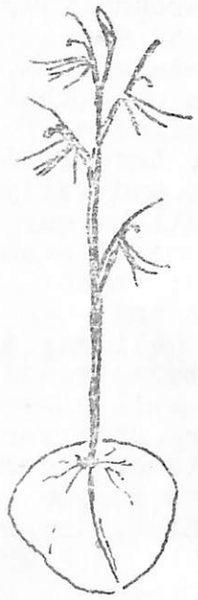
To truly enjoy nature, become an observer - note facts as you walk or ride along. Stop, investigate. Look and think! Ask why - ask yourself - ask your elders, your teachers, go to the school and public libraries for the solution to your puzzle.

Your observations and investigations of nature's secrets will fill you with wonder and admiration so that you will become a protector of nature and will do your utmost to prevent destruction or defacing of our natural heritage. Remember "Keep Australia Beautiful".

L.J.DELACCA
Editor.

In Flower JULY

● The notes this month are adapted from Bushland Notes written by Miss. Winifred Waddell for the Age some years ago, but they still apply today.



Acianthus exsertus

▽ Gnat Orchid.

● The Trim Greenhood has been in flower on the Peninsula for several weeks. If there is any doubt about this orchid look at the brown tongue which can just be seen inside the flower. It has a distinct V - shaped cleft.

● The Gnat Orchid flowers a little later. The single leaf is flat on the ground and green above and underneath.

● The Mosquito Orchid is also in flower. This little plant has one leaf, flat on the ground, dark green above and red underneath. A stem three or four inches tall, carries several insect-like flowers.

△ Pterostylis concinna

▽ Trim Greenhood.

● A eucalypt in flower now, and much visited by honeyeaters, parrots and lorikeets, is Eucalyptus sideroxylon the Ironbark. The bark on the trunk is very hard and persistent. This is one of the best trees for school grounds because of the many visitors it brings for the pupils.

● The common wattles of southern Victoria are covered with buds, some have flowered and some are now flowering. Cootamundra Wattle is widely planted in settled areas. It is a small tree and easily recognised by its grey feathery foliage.

● Another wattle which is now in flower is the beautiful Mt. Morgan wattle from Queensland. The bluish foliage is also attractive.

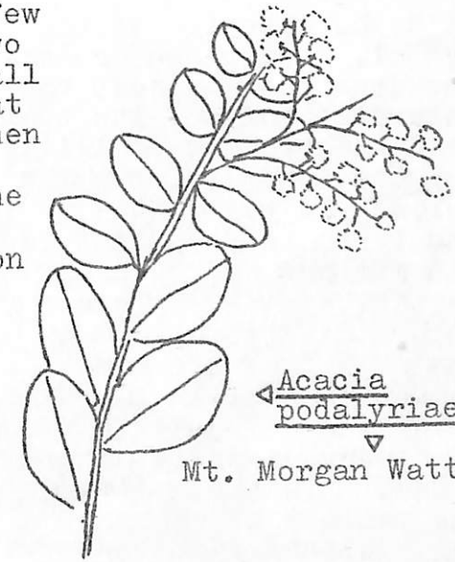
△ *Acacia baileyana* ▷ Cootamundra Wattle

● Pink beard-heath will be at its best during the next few weeks. This shrub may be two to three feet high. The small pink buds are so numerous that the whole plant is pink. When the flowers open the petals appear to be covered with fine white wool.

Leuco means white and pogon means beard, hence name Beard-Heaths.

◁ Leucopogon virgatus

▽ Beard-Heath



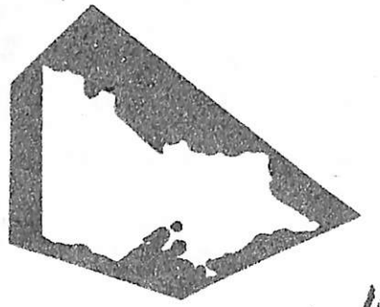
◁ Acacia podalyriaefolia

▽ Mt. Morgan Wattle

If you find any of these plants why not write a letter to the editor giving the date you find these in flower.

ON TOUR *with Nature Notes*

Full of wonders, the "Blue Dandenongs", only 20 miles east of Melbourne, provide a haven for the naturalist. Although the area is rather suburbanized in some places, there is still a wealth of natural life awaiting the explorer.



SHERBROOKE FOREST

With the lyrebird as its symbol, Sherbrooke Council has done much to keep the natural beauty of the bush-land and provide facilities for the tourist. In the forest you may discover the lyrebird (see last issue). His mimicry can be heard throughout all the bush. Unfortunately, wild dogs and cats (and sometimes humans) have either killed or driven deeper into the bush many of these amazing birds. In the gullies the variety of vegetation will delight you; outstand-ing in the midst of it, being the graceful tree-fern

◀ On tall slender stems the beaut-iful Fringe-Lily flowers here in late Spring.

The Dandenongs

On entering the area man's destructive nature will become obvious as the scarred, quarried hills 'hit you in the eye'.

FERNTREE GULLY NATIONAL PARK

Reserved in 1887 as a Public Park this was a favourite picnic place for the people of Melbourne who journeyed out there on the steam passenger trains.
Almost 1,000 acres from the Park which supports lush vegetation and a variety of animal life. Bushfires are a never-ending threat to the area and, now, an efficient fire fighting force guards the scenic attractions of the Hills.

Further into the Dandenongs you will come across the Silvan Dam which is an important link in Melbourne's water supply.
The dam can be seen from Mt. Dandenong (2077 feet above sea level), where there is a modern observatory.
On this mount are the four T.V. masts which transmit television to the Melbourne area.

One of the many songsters to be found in the forest - the Blue Wren

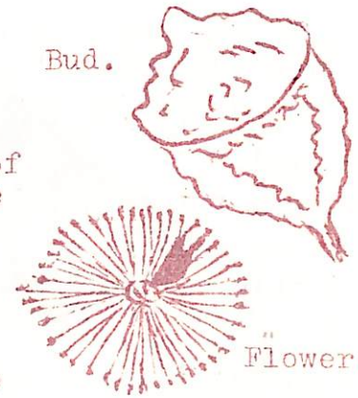
Stately tree ferns abound in deep gullies.

Old Names in a New Setting

Part 3 Trees

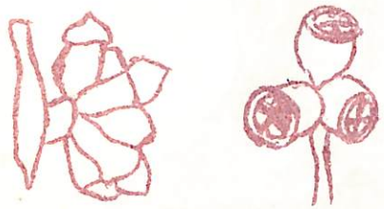
* Victoria's 'Christmas tree' is Prostanthera lasianthos, Tasmania's is Bursaria spinosa, N.S.W.'s Ceratopetalum gummiferum, and Western Australia's Nuytsia floribunda, none of them related to each other, nor to the original Christmas trees (firs) of Europe. New Zealand Christmas tree is a species of Metrosideros, known there by its Maori name pohutukawa.

* Most people think of eucalypts as 'gum trees', but only some of them are really trees that exude gum. The timber of Eucalyptus globulus (blue-gum) is called 'Tasmanian oak', but neither these trees, nor 'silky oak' (Grevillea robusta), nor the 'she-okes' (Casuarina) are even distantly related to the old-world oaks (Quercus). The 'box' group of eucalypts are not related to the true box (Buxus), nor is the 'brush box' (Tristania). Angophora trees (common in New South Wales), which look like gum-trees and are botanically close to them, differing by the absence of a lid (operculum) to the gum-nut (fruit), are strangely called 'apples', although they are not the slightest bit like the edible fruits of that name. Gippsland mahogany (Eucalyptus botryoides), sometimes called mahogany gum, often grown as shade trees in our school-grounds (e.g. Ringwood), is not related to the famous timber of that name from Central America, which is Swietenia.



Eucalyptus melliodora
(Yellow Box)

Eucalyptus globulus
(Blue Gum)



Eucalyptus botryoides
(Gippsland Mahogany)

Banksia prionotes

* The 'musk' of our rain forests is Olearia argophylla, a daisy-bush, quite unrelated to the musk-plant of Europe (Mimulus moschatus), while the 'hazel' of the same moist gullies is a species of Pomaderris, which is in quite a different family from the hazel-nut (Corylus) of Europe.

* Most people now give the banksias their real name, but the old name, 'honeysuckle', lingers in some areas, especially among old people. The large quantity of nectar was why the Australian trees were named after the true honeysuckle (Lonicera), an unrelated flower often grown in gardens.

* Try to find out whether native cherry (Exocarpos), myrtle beech (Nothofagus), Austral mulberry (Hedycarya), mountain ash (Eucalyptus regnans) and mountain pepper (Drimys), all found in the Dandenong Ranges and Marysville-Warburton districts, are entitled to their common names or not.

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This n That

Kurrajong has boat-shaped fruits with large yellow-orange seeds. The aborigines dug up the roots as they were succulent. They also ate the seeds. The bell-shaped cream and pink blossoms make the tree a beautiful sight. The aborigines made string nets etc from the fibre obtained from the bark. This lovely tree has been planted in streets in country towns but has almost disappeared from its natural habitat.

Western Kurrajong
(Brachychiton populneum)

Rockhopper Penguin.

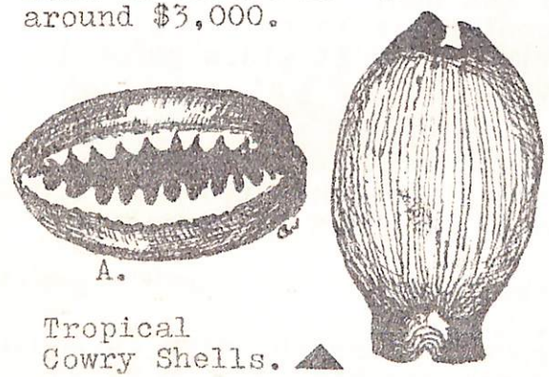
Did You Know:
that although penguins look friendly they are actually very selfish? Adelie penguins in the Antarctic often push one of their number into the water to see if it is attacked by seals. It it surfaces they know it is safe for a swim. If not they look for a safer spot to swim.

THERE'S MONEY IN SHELLS.

Like jewels, shells have a definite value. Depending on their rarity and difficulty of collection their value can range from priceless to a few cents per dozen.

● Shells have been used for trade and even money. Evidence shows that shells were used in various civilizations as a form of trade; in fact, many shells have been found long distances from their natural habitat, indicating they have been used for some sort of barter.

● There are three known LEUCODON COWRY shells. Each is valued somewhere around $3,000.



A.

Tropical Cowry Shells.

A. underneath view

● KING MIDAS' SLIT SHELL was lifted from 2,000 feet of water in the Bahamas area - the only one of its kind found. Its value is priceless.

● At one time the PRECIOUS WENTLETRAP sold for hundreds of dollars. Now that many have been found in the Pacific area their value is about $4 each.

Australian Wentletrap - similar to the shell mentioned.

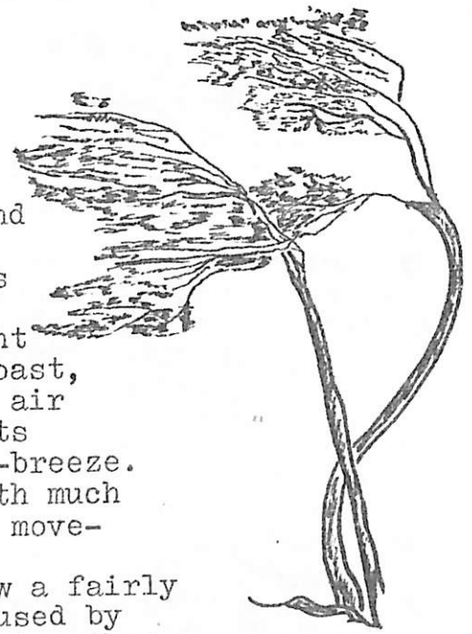
Actual size 1½".

● Even 15,000 years ago shells were placed in graves, showing that they were used for food and ornament. One of the earliest known shell collections is that of the Roman Emperor Caligula in AD 40.

● Elizabeth Bligh, wife of the famous Captain Bligh, had an outstanding shell collection. Many rarities in her collection had been sent home by her husband as he travelled the South Pacific.

OOOOOOO

WIND



O Wind is something that most people take for granted, yet wind plays a tremendous part in the daily lives of us all. What is the wind? It is simply, moving air! Warm air is light and tends to rise. Near the coast, when warm air rises, the cooler air from the sea races in to take its place - result a refreshing sea-breeze. At night the sea keeps its warmth much longer than the land so the air movement goes the other way.

O Some of the greatwinds follow a fairly regular pattern. These are caused by the earth spinning on its axis, together with the tremendous heat of the sun. The heated air moves upwards, cooler air takes its place and the spinning of the earth drives it sideways or in spirals and so a wind is born.

For You To Discover

1. What instrument is used to measure (a) wind direction? (b) wind speed?
2. Find out all about the Beaufort Scale.
3. Find the names of the earth's great winds.
4. Name some reasons why wind is important to man and his life on earth.

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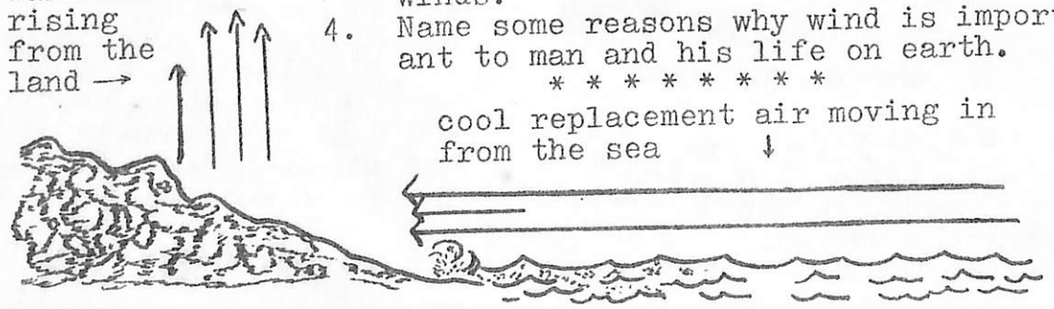
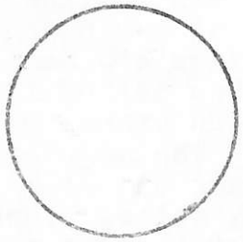


Microscope under the

MORE ABOUT INSECTS.

The compound eye of a butterfly or the proboscis of a blow fly are amazing. Can you spot the tiny hooks on the wings of some insects? These hooks fit over the ribs of the other wing so that in flight the two wings work together: thus the four wings of the insect actually become two wings in flight. Small insects, such as, thrip and tiny fruit flies can be studied whole. It may help if the insect is viewed in liquid.

The proboscis of a butterfly.

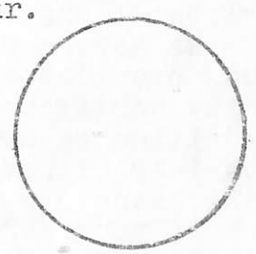


Now, you draw the antenna of a Moth.

POLLEN

Take a few microscope slides and paste a ¾inch square of black paper in the centre of each. Shake the pollen from a flower; there is plenty of pollen on a tiger lily, arum lily or pumpkin flower - By using top lighting you will see pollen in full colour.

Draw what you see here.



MAGNIFICATION

Unless you have an expensive microscope use a small magnification to view your specimen. You can obtain very interesting images when using low power magnifications, say, between 20X and 50X. A first class maching is the dissecting microscope with a range of 10X to 50X eyepieces. It is fairly cheap, very easy to operate and gives excellent views of insects etc.

Drop a Line

Editor, 'Nature Notes',
State School,
Blackburn Lake,
P.O. Box 30,
NUNAWADING. 3131.

☆ Our letter box this month is once again almost empty so let's have your letters. Tell me of any interesting observations you may have made whether at school or when out walking or driving at weekends. Tell me also of the activities of your nature or bird clubs at shcool.

We have a nature club at Blackburn Lake. This club has provided two bird baths, several bird feeders and many nectar bearing plants for our schoolgrounds. In addition we are learning the names of many of the large variety of native plants in the sanctuary and surrounding grounds.

If your school hasn't a club why not ask your teacher to help you form one. It can be fun and very interesting but don't forget to write and tell me about it.

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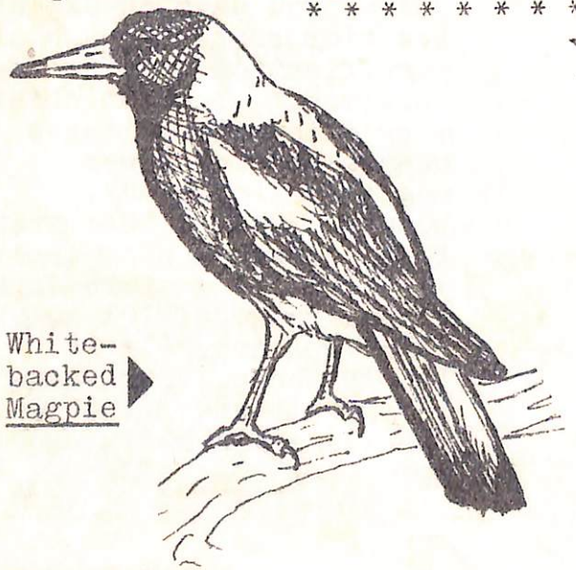

White-backed Magpie

★ Our first letter this month comes from Wendy Sharp, 4A, of Blackburn Lake S.S..... One day when a man was cutting down trees at our house, I found a Magpie's nest, it had fallen out of the tree when the branch was sawn off. The magpie's nest was made out of blue, pink, white, black and rusty wire and twigs and bark. It was a big nest.

The man also had to shift a very sleepy owl from the fork of the tree before he could cut it down. The owl flew away into another tree next door.

☆ ED. Well done Wendy! Was the owl like the one on our cover - the boobook owl? Do you know what we mean when we say the owl is a nocturnal bird? Find out the names of some more nocturnal birds.

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★ Ann Harding of St. Mary Magdalen's School, Jordanville sends us the first original poem to be printed in Nature Notes. Good Work Ann!

Moving On

Autumn leaves Autumn leaves,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze
Green and yellow, orange and brown
Plenty of colours if you just look round.
My heart feels so glad and light
Because of this happy sight

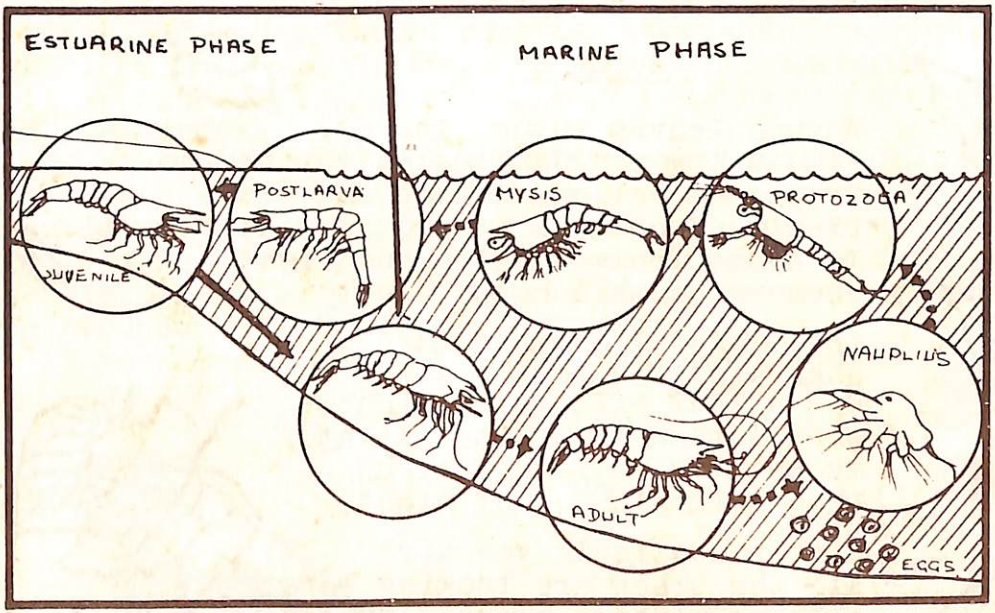
The trees'll soon be bare
When winter's in the air
Not a leaf will be in sight
When Autumn takes its flight
My heart's no longer light
When Autumn's out of sight.

Winter now is in the air
All the trees are looking bare
All the windows now are white
I wish Jack Frost would vanish
from sight.
All our toes are feeling cold
Because Jack Frost is big and bold
All our fingers are feeling numb
I wish Jack Frost didn't have to come
We shall all be feeling gay
When Jack Frost has gone away!

Prawns

BANANA PRAWNS are in the news lately. With ships of the Russion and Japanese fishing fleets trawling close to our territorial waters concern and interest has been shown in that delicacy which earned $6.1 million in 1966-67. The C.S.I.R.O. is to make an intensive study of the life cycle and breeding grounds of the Banana Prawn.

THE LIFE CYCLE of the BANANA PRAWN appears to be about one year. Born in waters of 40-70 feet, the young prawns pass through several phases until after about 4 weeks they move to river estuaries where they live and grow for about four months. As mature prawns they then move out to the breeding grounds. It is at this stage that the Banana Prawn industry makes its haul.



Life-Cycle of the Banana Prawn. G. Hensler

The history of the prawn in Australia dates back to the 1790's when starving colonists netted prawns with other fish for much needed food. It was not until 150 years later that the industry began to grow. In 1957 the Government provided money for a thorough search for breeding grounds; since then, the industry has rapidly grown.

NATURE NOTES COMMITTEE

Mr. F.J.C. Rogers ..... S.S. Lilydale
Mr. G. White ..... S.S. Blackburn East
Mr. L.J. Delacca (Editor).... S.S. Blackburn Lake

NEXT ISSUE WILL BE AT DEPOTS ON WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6th.