

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER.

A monthly Bulletin devoted to matters of interest to
The Sydney Bush Walkers, 5 Hamilton Street, Sydney.

No.76

APRIL, 1941

Price 3d.

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A SNOW HOLIDAY

By Merle Hamilton

At Bett's Camp, Kosciuszko, one evening last winter, four bushwalkers scrambled out of the snow tractor with their packs, skis, cameras, and all the other gear bushwalkers have attached to them. It was cold but the Corneys welcomed us warmly and their welcome was followed by hot baths and hot dinners.

The following morning we were up early to try our skis as half of us had never been on snow before. There are skis and skis (and skiers and skiers).

Len's skis wanted to slip backwards at first, which made him think perhaps he had put "backward" wax on them. But when he and they came to know each other better they consented to go up hill, and Len encouraged the friendship by giving them a diet of different sorts of wax every day, but in spite of the bribing those skis always resented the up hill climb ever to the end. Len often carried his skis up hill just to humour them and we watched them smile down from his shoulder as he sank down in the snow; first his boots then his knees were lost in the snow. We often wondered if we would lose Lennie altogether, but perhaps it was the diet of meat he ate that kept him safe.

Now Ken's skis were just the opposite, they delighted in going up hill. The higher the fewer was their belief, and those skis were right, so up they went, almost, but not quite, as well as they came down. No, all the skis I met, and probably all the skis I never met, love coming down hill.

My skis had this affection also, for one day after I had climbed a hill with them on my shoulder and was bending down to put them on at the top, one of them slipped away to the bottom of the hill all by itself and it was a long climb down for me to recover it.

Bill's skis had their own special tricks; they never could agree about the way to face when Bill fell down. If the right one decided on north, the left was certain to decide on S.S.E. and on rising Bill found it hard to advance his left foot north and his right foot S.S.E. There was nothing for it but to make them agree and it was a long, wet business sitting in the snow till they came to a decision.

The first day we practiced kick-turns, snow-plowing, stemming, and Christianas; to the uninitiated these terms mean nothing and they still are nothing to me, all except the kick-turn. To do a kick-turn you have to stand on one leg and brandish the other leg bravely in front of you, complete with ski. You must then swing it round so it points backwards and falls neatly parallel to your anchored ski; then you stand in a tied-in-a-knot position from which, you think desperately, you can never recover without breaking something. You stand there helpless, leaning on your two stocks thinking, "If I slip, Oh, if I slip, I'm slipping, Oh!" But perhaps you don't. Your weight is gingerly shifted on to the reverse ski, you wave the other ski about so it falls into line beside its fellow and you look as relieved as a hen that's laid an egg.

Now wax is another thing that the uninitiated know not of, so to them I say (and I hope no others are listening) waxing skis is an art, a black art brewed in the dark recesses of skiers' souls and applied with ritualistic zeal. There is one wax for fast snow, one for slow, one for climbing, one for down hill, etc. You need a universal wax but there is no such nostrum. The idea is to wax the skis so that one wax wears off just in time to reveal a second wax for the snow lower down, but wax is a mystery to me. I suggest waxing one ski with down-hill wax and the other with uphill wax and ski up hill on one leg and down hill on the other, I'm sure the idea is worth trying.

The second day, feeling that we had graduated from the nursery stage, we set off for the Chalet to use the ski lift. Getting on the ski is a problem. At times it just sails past the would-be-lifter. Then, having caught the lift, it is a hazard whether you stay on it and reach the top or not, a slight movement and up goes the spring and slithering down in the snow goes the passenger. But the art of riding the ski lift is worth mastering, for the successful passenger finds himself dumped off at the top with the climbing achieved for him, all he has to do is ski down. SKI DOWN! It sounds easy written in two words. The first time I was dumped at the top I picked myself up and looked down hill I had just ascended. How would I get down that long, steep slope with skis on my feet that travelled at flying speed? If I did set my feet in a downward direction would I miss that rock, that ski-lift, that clump of rocks, that creek, in fact that Chalet?

Baby birds must feel as I did when they first leave the nest and mother bird says "Fly away!" What a long way the ground must seem to the baby bird from the edge of the nest.

Someone said "Watch me." I watched him go away round the mountain side, turn a hair-pin bend and zig-zag down the slope. With my breath and my stocks held and my innards corgealing into a quivering jelly I followed his tracks; travelling across the steep slope my feet sped along on two levels which was most disconcerting the left foot was as far away from me as it could be and my right knee was touching my nose. Then on top of this awkward negotiation the turn came; how was I to take it? I didn't, it took me, all of a heap in the snow. I tried to get up but my feet were not mine, they belonged to the skis, who, at that moment were undecided about our direction. Finally we continued together and the little black specks at the bottom of the hill resolved themselves into recognizable bushwalkers who were reached only after many turns and falls.

As the day progressed so did our technique, with the help of the ski lift, but unfortunately, Bill hurt his leg and had to give up ski-ing.

That night as we dried our snow clothes beside the fire at Betts we made plans for the morrow. If the weather still held good we decided to climb to the Summit. It was seven miles by road from Betts, with snow poles to follow and a few huts to shelter in should the weather become bad. Seaman Hut was near the top; we could lunch in there.

The morn dawned, it was snowing and had been blowing wildly in the night. Would there be any Summit for us? My imagination was active as soon as I awoke that morning. It was no use going only to be stranded in Seaman Hut for a few days, foodless, or worse, never finding a hut and getting lost in a blizzard. Breakfast interrupted my further thoughts. At the meal I waited for comments on the days outlook.

From Ken, "Well, I think we'll go, the weather seems to be improving". From Bill, "My leg is still too bad, but you go, and I'll have a little ramble round here and take some photos."

Len decided for the Summit, and now it was my speak. Photographic rambles I had heard of before, fifty miles in one day, up cliffs, pushing down creeks, no time for food; so no food carried, just gallop to catch the train, and no time to take photos. Naturally I decided for the Summit.

Well we made the seven miles in good time, thanks to putting skins on our skis. It was a fine day and we surveyed a grand view, but we could not see the lakes. I imagined beautiful deep blue patches in the land of white, but of course the deep blue lakes were frozen over and filled with snow; they just looked like valleys amongst the hills.

Back down the hills we had so slowly plodded up we skied in a twinkling. Its great going down hill on skis.

The photographic ramble, led by Bill, was a success, so we were told on our return, but we have yet to see the photos.

RE-UNION 1941

By Edna Garrad.

Blue sky, low green hills with scattered farms and here and there orchards and patches of corn, lovely billowy clouds that seemed to rest gently on the eastern horizon, a stately home and picturesque trees silhouetted against the sky line, the tranquil Nepean flowing silently between its tree clad banks, tents half hidden in waving grass — this was the scene of our 1941 re-union.

About 111 members gathered together to enjoy the major event of our Bush Walker year, some coming from as far afield as Newcastle, Scone, Tamworth and Kandos. We were glad to see them and know that they found the miles of travelling worth while for the pleasure of renewing friendships and the fun of the campfire.

Of course we missed Jack Debert, whose voice and personality have become so much a part of the tradition of re-union. Many other old friends were also missed this year, but we hope all the "regulars" will be seen at next re-union. Wal. Roots's wire from Brisbane, unfortunately, did not arrive in time to be read at the campfire, but we all knew he would be thinking of us. This was confirmed by his words: "Although can't make it please keep a spot at the fire for the Roots." John and Dora Harvey also sent their greetings from Casino.

The campfire, as usual, was thoroughly enjoyable. Richard in handing over the symbols of office expressed most adequately the sentiments and responsibilities involved. As President he has most worthily upheld the dignity of his office and earned the appreciation of all members. We know that Alex. will carry on with a similar sincerity and impartiality.

The words written by Clare Kinsella to introduce the new members were well recited by Dorothy Vickery and Ray Kirkby. They expressed the feelings so well known to bushwalkers but seldom spoken. A most pleasing feature of the campfire was the prominent part played by the new members, and this augurs well for the future of the Club. Ruth McLaren recited an entertaining poem and there were various other amusing items, including a tug-of-war between old and new members.

Appreciation of campfire events is a matter for the individual but one of the outstanding successes was the delightful singing of the Melody Maidens, whose harmonies were very charming. Obviously Stoddy had spent much time in training her choir. Our thanks for much organising work done beforehand go also to Peter Page and the other members of the Re-Union Committee.

After supper the singing went on into the early hours of the morning and from the hillside where I camped it was very pleasant to listen to the voices accompanied by Tara's flute and the accordin played by Arthur Brophy.

We would like our Members overseas to know that we thought and talked of them a lot at this re-union. Two very interesting letters written by Ralph Holroyd were passed around and proved enlightening. I formed one of a group to whom the letters were read, and in the lovely serenity of our surroundings it was difficult to imagine the scenes so graphically described by Ralph. I think

in all our hearts there dwelt the prayer that some day soon all the boys would be back to re-une with us again.

The usual damper competition was held and won by Roxy Barrett. An innovation this year was the custard-making competition for men. The entries were very creditable (I enjoyed portion of one for lunch) and the winner was Reg. Alder.

Sunday was spent in yarning - discussing past trips and planning new ones and as we strolled back to Emu Plains Station in the evening it was agreed that Re-Union 1941 had been good.

FEDERATION NOTES

In Warra Sanctuary near Patonga an area of 950 acres has been gazetted as reserved "for the promotion of the study and the preservation of native flora and fauna". This reservation has been made following the representations of our Associate Member, Miss Cromelin, backed by the Federation and other conservation bodies, and, so far as we know, is the first area to be dedicated for the "promotion of the study" of the native plants and animals.

.....
Here is a date to note in your diary -- Tuesday, 22nd July, 1941. Hordern Bros' Ballroom has been booked that night for the Bushwalkers' Ball - Tickets 7/6 each. Miss Cherie Jessop of the S.B.W. and R.C.C. has been appointed Hon. Organiser of the Ball and the Committee will consist of one representative from each affiliated club.

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From the Garawarra Report delegates learned that Mr. Moffatt has been appointed to the vacancy on the Trust caused by the death of Mr. Leighton Bailey; that all (eight) Permissive Occupancies in the Garawarra Park have been renewed for 1941; and that a motor parking area is being established near Maynards.

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The vacancies on the Publication Committee have now been filled and those who will be responsible for producing "The Bushwalker" No.5 are:- Editor, Rae Elsie Mitchell (Warrigal Club); Assistant Editor, Len Raper (Campfire Club); Business Manager, Jim Somerville (C.M.W.); Advertising Manager, Russell Huntly-Tucker (Y.M.C.A. Ramblers); Technical Adviser, Ron Kerr (C.M.W.)

.....
Of course you know the Railway Maps for Bushwalkers - "Sutherland to Stanwell Park" and "Epping, Turramurra to Hawkesbury River" - well supplies have nearly run out and one of the Federation's Information Officers - Niniam Melville has been commissioned to prepare new and up-to-date maps of these areas for the Railways to publish this winter.

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The Federation's application for a special lease of 130 acres at St. Helena has been refused, but - a Permissive Occupancy of the area has been granted, and accepted.

THE DROUGHT BREAKERS.

by R. Alder.

Many was the time I wished before my holidays that we would have fine weather with perhaps just a little rain beforehand to swell and sweeten the streams, but apparently I started wishing just one week late. It was like this, I was the sole male in a party with four women and we had ideas of swimming the Shoalhaven Blockup; that was when we left Sydney on New Year's Day for Nerriga, our starting point on a three weeks' trek to Wentworth Falls.

Chris, our car driver, told us of the condition of the Endrick country and finally advised most strongly that we should take a track to within two miles of its junction with the Shoalhaven.

We eventually reached the Endrick and, after much deliberation, our tents were pitched on the river bank a quarter mile below the bridge. Two of the girls selected one level spot close to the river and I found one slightly higher up, thinking perhaps the river might rise if it happened to rain. Jupiter must have known we had arrived, for no sooner were the tents pitched and fires lighted than down it came, and it was no mere summer shower, it bounced straight through the tents and made us cover everything up with ground sheets.

Within a couple of minutes we were out digging trenches around the tents, and at the storm's height I had a trench about nine inches by four to carry away the water which had fallen over an area about the size of the club room. There was a slight lull after about a quarter hour and as I paused in my labours of keeping the trench open I noticed that a small dry gully beside my tent was beginning to run water. Before I could even shout a warning a two foot wall of water came rushing down and spread itself over the flat river bank, through my fire and straight onto the girls' tent. The sides were pegged down and, swish, up and around it went; then two surprised faces looked out at the water which had now flooded their "best" campsite to a depth of six inches. Recovering from the shock, out came their packs to be placed on higher ground and up came the tent, pegs and all.

Our tea was lost as the billies were upset, and some eggs floated away down the flood channel; four of these were recovered unbroken next morning. It was most fortunate that the packs had not been unpacked or much more would have been lost or spoilt. The Endrick, previously clear and peacefully flowing, now became a mass of swirling brown, debris-laden water. We had fears of it rising further but the rain stopped and we continued to prepare the remains of our meal in peace.

The river was still up in the morning so, following Chris's advice, off we went over a ridge to his track. Soon we were climbing out of the river and eventually crossed the ridge to drop down on a reasonably large creek which showed no evidence of having flooded the night before. We crossed this many times and passed deserted huts; at one of them a stallion held two of the girls at bay until their numbers were swelled and with a combined brave front we scared him away and were allowed to pass.

Leaving the creek, the track climbed to the centre of the ridge and from this point the Endrick could be seen not more than a half mile away. The track split into dozens of sheep pads, so, taking one, we plunged down the hillside to a flat where I joyously exclaimed, "over this small rise and lunch on the "Endrick". Imagine our surprise when we found that it was not as easy as all that. From the flat the opposite bank of the river seemed very close and it looked as if it could not be more than a hundred feet below. Instead it was in the vicinity of 800-1000 feet below and the only way down by steep clay and shale ridges made dangerously slippery by the last night's rain. The river below was clear and low and it seemed strange that after the previous night's flood higher up it had cleared and returned to its former level in so short a time. For a while I wondered if the river we were going down onto was the Endrick but it seemed impossible that a river as large as this one was could rise in two to three miles.

It was a ticklish and dangerous job getting down to the river and the closer we came to the bottom the steeper it became and fewer bushes to hold onto. At last at the bottom I looked back and thought if anybody had suggested that it was possible to cling to the slope we had come down I would have thought them mad -- Bindook landslides had nothing on it.

There was no question about stopping for lunch, packs were just dropped and we were onto it. Then our friend the rain came again, to remain with us for the next forty hours. The river for quite a while appeared to be growing noisier and soon the water began to rise. Small stones were first covered, then larger boulders and before long the sand bank on which we had placed our packs. A dead pig was carried swiftly by and our beautifully clear river once more became a seething, writhing mass of dirty water. Our storm of the night before must have been very local for us to race the flood waters and I suppose that previously the river had been very low and every little hole had to be filled before the flood waters could make any progress.

It was no longer possible to walk alongside the river, so, donning packs, up and around the sides we went. We had to cross many times and with water up and around our thighs this was no easy job and there was always the uncertainty of stepping into a pothole. It was impossible to see below the surface of the water. All afternoon was taken up in doing the two or three miles to the junction; here the Endrick had broken through its flood channel and was joining the Shoalhaven in two places.

The Shoalhaven appeared to be about three feet above its normal level but was not flowing at all swiftly and we managed to find a place where we could wade easily to the other side where a better camp site was to be had. Then came the unwelcome job of pitching camp and lighting fires in the rain. Fortunately, with the large piles of driftwood to be found on the banks this was not a very difficult job as much dry stuff could be dragged out from underneath. On the hillside opposite rocks loosened by the rain could be seen and heard crashing down the landslides, and occasionally some could be heard behind and not very far away and I wondered sometimes if we were under one, for to be awakened by a rock crashing through the tent would not be a pleasant experience.

We were a day ahead of schedule and so next morning, with the rain still attempting to float the tent away, we decided not to move until lunch and so

have a dry lunch spot at least. Then, donning sand-covered groundsheets, we set off, pushing through young casuarinas which drenched us with water. After an hour of this pushing through and clambering over slippery rocks, suggestions began to be advanced that certain spots would make excellent camp-sites and I'm afraid I weakened and gave in so unpleasant was the walking.

We camped above a fast rapid in which the water swirled around large rocks forming in a way a toll gate. Here the familiar Shoalhaven boulder flats were still uncovered. Pitching our tents and preparing our meals in the rain now appeared the most natural thing for us to do, and so engrossed were we in the great habit of eating that it was some time before we realised that the river was rising again. We sat in our tents and watched and wondered when it would stop, visions of the river rising to at least six feet above our tents were in our minds for casuarina needles showed evidence of previous floods in trees around the tents. It was dusk now and the river was roaring and racing over rocks previously had stood feet out of the water. When would it stop we wondered, so a whitish rock on the opposite bank was fixed as a gauge; if the water covered it we would prepare to evacuate. In the twilight, with alternating patches of dark and light cloud, the rock would disappear and reappear, making us all the time uncertain of the true height of the river. Sleep was out of the question and someone noted that the water would be lapping around our heads before it was felt, as our feet in the sleepingbags were downhill slightly from our heads. At times I dozed and the noise of the rapid became quieter, then, waking with a start, the roar filled the air and many a hasty look would be taken to reassure myself that the river had not risen any further. It was not until dawn came that I had any real sleep.

Soon after the sun came up the rain miraculously stopped and patches of blue sky appeared. Our luck had changed and we lost no time in spreading damp clothes and gear out to dry. Already the hillsides were assuming a different colour and everything seemed fresh and clean; the river was remaining at a constant level and the worst of our troubles appeared to have passed. The river was flowing so swiftly that even in backwaters it was impossible to stand up in anything more than eighteen inches deep.

We made good progress now along sandy and grassy banks at times broken by rocks which were easily climbed over. The flooded river roaring and swirling made walking all the more pleasant.

A lunch stop was made at a large creek and while the others were enjoying our usual four hour siesta I went down stream to see if it would be possible to make our way around a small cliff I had sighted about a quarter mile away. My fears were soon realised; I could not either climb around or over it, and so back I went and then with Mary made some experiments in crossing the river. Even without packs we found that the distance a swimmer was carried along in relation to the distance crossed was excessive so we were faced with three alternatives; to attempt to cross the river, to wait until it subsided, or to climb out and travel along the ridges. The last idea was decided upon as rain could be seen coming over and it was possible that a week or more might be spent in waiting for the river to go down.

We went up the steep ridge at the creek junction and it soon developed

into a knife-edge formation and here could be seen the remains of an old track, so, hopefully, we plodded to the top. It was decided that we would follow ridges to the west until some farm or track was met and from there make our way to Bungonia Creek. We were very hazy as to just where we were as the map I had showed no detail of the surrounding country, so imagine our joy when, while we were following a faint track, I noticed a horse tethered to a tree. No rider could be seen anywhere and we shouted and copped but had no response. We waited a half hour for him to return but he did not come, so off we went along the track again, sound in the knowledge that our horseman must follow us out.

After about twenty minutes he caught us up. Never before have I seen anybody of a similar appearance. Imagine a man of about 5'2", thickset, wearing shorts and a shirt with its tails hanging out, bearded and with a broken nose. He was deeply browned from years of exposure and thick black hair covered his body, while neither he nor his clothes had the appearance of having been washed for at least twelve months. It was raining and the flies clung to our dampened clothes in thousands while he had not a single one on him and the rain just ran off his greasy back.

We told him of our predicament and asked for his advice as to the best way to Bungonia. He offered to guide us to the road and a hut where we could stop the night, and off we went walking swiftly behind his horse for miles across a veritable maze of ridges and creeks, across tracks, past clearings and old gold mine workings until we came to the hut.

The hut he had taken us to was occupied by some campers who had come up from the Horseshoe Bends so he took us onto a house two miles further on. At this place an attempt had been made to mine Bauxite and gold but the project had been abandoned. We were very glad of the shelter as the soil in the district was of clay and the water lay deep on its surface. Next morning we were surprised to see a strange figure ride up to the gate and come towards the house. On a closer examination it was seen to be our friend of the night before, only now he was in his Sunday best. He wore long trousers, boots, vest and a near-white shirt and he had the appearance of a man out to impress the ladies. In his hand he carried a sugar bag, and, tumbling its contents out, he said he thought we were short of tucker so he had brought these few things along. There were apples, plums, turnips, and a dirty brown mess in some paper. This he offered with some reticence and, on being asked what it was, said that he boiled down sheep until no water was left and this was the result. A little in a pot of water with some vegetables made excellent soup, so he said, but the girls could not believe him so in our best manner it was declined.

Leaving our benefactor, we made good time into the village of Bungonia. The weather was fine now and large cumulus clouds filled the sky. On the road to the Bungonia Look-out, whilst manoeuvring to take a photographic masterpiece, I almost stood on a snake so intent was I in looking through the view finder. He was brown and about 4'6" long and did not live long after I removed myself to a more respectable distance.

From the Look-out our way was made down a shale ridge to Bungonia Creek, where we camped for the next three days as our cross-country jaunt had put us ahead of schedule. While on the creek several trips were taken up into the gorge, which, with the recent floods, had water a foot deep all over its floor.

The effect was most beautiful as the water served to reflect the light up under the overhanging rocks and make them much brighter. At one point in going up to the gorge we had to crawl up through a hole from a cave in which the water was flowing through. When we were up the gorge one morning a thunderstorm came over very suddenly and it was only by racing back to the camp that we were able to save our gear from getting wet. It was most difficult to dig a trench as there was only about three inches of soil over the boulders. The rain passed and up came the creek, this time about three feet and it was only with difficulty that it could be crossed on a walk we took down to Barber's Creek that afternoon. This creek had also flooded and was flowing swiftly down into the Shoalhaven; the old man at the hut said that it was the first time in years that that he had seen it flood. Going back across Bungonia Creek was even more risky and we finished up by swimming it.

After these further experiences of flooded rivers we shifted camp, when the creek subsided, to the foot of the Tallong Track so that if the weather played any more tricks we would be prepared for it. The next day we broke camp again after a night's rain and began our climb out to Tallong. Our last view of the Shoalhaven was a low cloud hanging deep down into the valley and a light misty rain covering everything. From Tallong we caught the train to Mittagong and so left the Shoalhaven and the rain which had given us so much trouble but what fun.

CLUB GOSSIP.

Wafted down the wind from Roseville comes word that Thel. and Rastus Hellyer are going to Melbourne to live. Although we have not seen much of them since daughter Rhondda arrived, we are sorry to hear they will in future be so much further away. We wish them happiness in their new home.

The Friday after the Annual Meeting we had a visit from two other old friends whom we seldom see now, Bill Chambers and wife Pearl. Although Bill is still no strong enough to do much walking he had hurried to pay his 2/6d for this year's subscription as a Non-Active Member. That is the way the Treasurer likes it.

Another Non-Active Member, George Baker, has returned from the wilds of Cairns. Probably not even George knows how long he will be in Sydney this time, or where his wandering feet will take him next!

"Whatto" is the canoe Bob Savage and Jack Hill took down the Kowmung, but Bob is not playing that sort of game now and Harry and Joan prefer their folboat. Harry got tired of supporting "Whatto" in idleness on the Nepean and donated her to the Bushwalkers' 'Services' Committee, which raffled her at the Re-union. Tim Coffey is now deciding what to do with a spare canoe.

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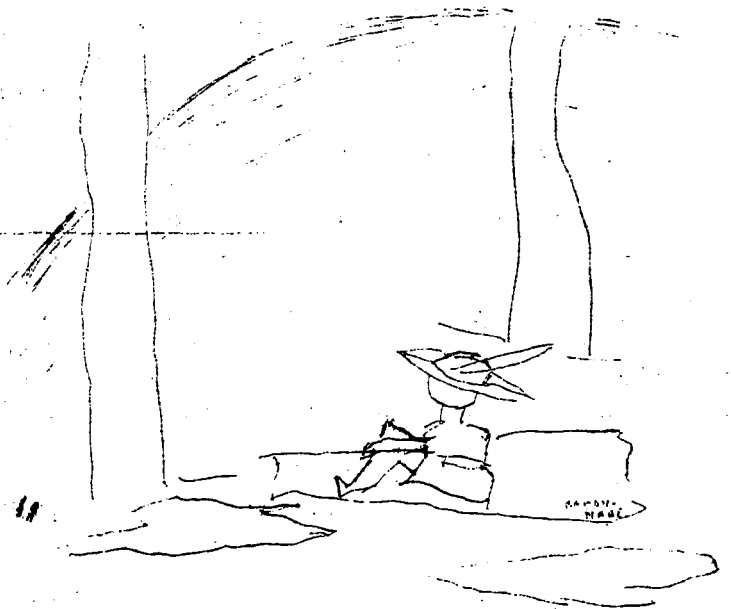
FAMOUS WALKER FASTASIES 2



Queen Elizabeth
said —

"Mr. Thankyou,
Sir Walter."

Dorothy Lammy
Says
"Thanks, but I carry
my own
Paddy-Made!"



CAMP GEAR FOR WALKERS

PADDY PALLIN

327 George Street
SYDNEY.

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING.

The Office Bearers elected for 1941/1942 are:-

President: Alex. Colley.

Vice-Presidents:- Edna Garrad and Roley Cotter

Hon.Secretary: Jean Moppett Hon.Assistant Secretary: Jessie Martin

Hon.Treasurer: Ray Kirkby Hon.Walks Secretary: Grace Edgecombe

Hon.Social Secretary: Doreen Helmrich

Committee Members:- Joyce Trimble and Winifred Duncombe.(Dunk)
Bill Hall and Reg Alder

Delegates to Federation: Merle Hamilton. (On Committee)
(From August, 1941) Marie Byles

Joyce Kennedy

John Manson (On Committee.)

Substitute Delegates to Federation:- Dorothy Lawry and
(From August, 1941.) Alex. Colley

Delegate to Parks & Playgrounds Movement:- Mrs. H. Stoddart. (Stoddy.)

Trustees:- Dorothy Lawry, Maurie Berry and Joe Turner.

Honorary Auditor: Bill Whitney.

After some discussion the annual subscription was fixed at 10/- again this year and the Entrance Fee 2/6.

We were glad to hear that the Coast and Mountain Walkers, Rucksack Club and Rover Ramblers have all sent delegates to the 'Services' Committee and have supplied the names and addresses of their members with the fighting forces, who will, in future, also receive magazines, photos, etc. from this Committee.

Members were also pleased to learn that - through the good offices of Kath. Doherty - Bernard O'Reilly of Lamington, has presented to the S.B.W. a copy of his recently published book, "Green Mountains."

Two other items of interest from the correspondence were that the Federation has decided on Novr. 1st and 2nd for its Second Re-union Camp, and that the Sutherland Shire Council proposes to declare C Riding a "residential area", which will prevent any quarrying, etc, anywhere near "Morella-Karong".

Members were reminded that the Bouddi Natural Park Trust is arranging a working bee at Maitland Bay on May 10th and 11th. The slogan for the weekend is "The more the merrier", and workers are asked to bring mattocks or axes!

CHANT OF THE NEW MEMBERS - 1941 RE-UNION.

By Clare Kinsella

We have walked the trackless bushland
We have tramped the silent hillsides
Down into the hidden valleys
By the sides of lonely rivers
We have wandered, joy within us.

We have learned to love the Bluegum
Know the Cox, The Dogs, the Kowmung,
All the ranges, all the small streams
Of our mountains, of our coastland
Know the trees and know the flowers
Know the birds that from the branches
Sing their song of joy in living

From the mountain's hard won summit
We have watched, widespread before us
Tree clad ranges, tree clad ranges
Stretching to the far horizon.
Seen the free birds, rising, soaring,
Plunging to the depths below us.
While we felt the winds of heaven
Mighty winds that cleanse and strengthen
Blow upon our fevered bodies.

In the cool clean creeks and streamlets
We have drunk and found refreshment
We have dived and swum and frolicked
By their banks in golden sunshine
We have watched as in a mirror
Clear blue sky and piling white clouds
Tall trees towering far above us

We have walked through rain and sunshine
Blinding heat and piercing coldness
For this is the way we've chosen
For this is the way of walking
Thus we learn to know our bushland
Land we love and land we honour
Land that we shall strive to cherish.

Just as man down through the ages
Gathered round the blazing embers
There to join in song and story
Join in fun and friendly frolic
Now that you have heard our story
Know the tale of our probation
Do you wish that we might join you
Join you round the friendly fire?

LETTERS FROM THE LADS

Mr. Holroyd, Senr, has kindly permitted us to publish the following extracts from two of Ralph's letters:-

9th January, 1941

".....Christmas passed as any other day, almost unnoticed. Even then we were exchanging intensive artillery fire with the It's, and although we did not take the initiative till a later date, no thought could be given to the festive season. Rations were exactly the same, Bully Beef, biscuits and brackish water, supplemented by an orange each, and later a hot meal, Bully Beef stew and porridge which usually replaces any form of pudding. On rare occasions a Comforts Fund issue of cigarettes and Nestles Ration Chocolate (an absolute Godsend to one who does not smoke nor put tea to any better use than rinsing out the dixie) is made available. Now we are in the field and seldom sleep in the same hole twice, such facilities as Canteens and Officers' Messes are no longer within reach.

On Boxing Day, in yet another position, our noses buried well into the ground, dodging stray shell-fire, the boys had reason to celebrate, for a consignment of Comforts Fund Christmas Hampers, reported to have been sunk by Iti. bombers, suddenly came to light. Their appetising contents, pudding, cake, peaches, cream, cheese and the like, made a wonderful difference to the boys' spirits. By coincidence, Frank Hurley, Australian photographer, appeared out of the blue, or rather dust, just as these hampers were being opened, and secured several shots showing men childishly happy with their Christmas gifts, but otherwise dirty, unshaven, and tired out from many forced marches, constant digging in rocky ground and vigilance against enemy action, whether from the air, their artillery or night patrols.

Living and working on the same standing as my men, I too found that three pints of water a day does not leave much for washing and shaving. Often we shed neither boots nor greatcoats and balaclavas for days on end, for the cold is intense while during the days, even if sunny, an ever-prevalent wind pierces through all our futile wrappings. It is often eight o'clock before our hands thaw out sufficiently to prepare some breakfast. Once a 7-lb tin of oatmeal was a welcome addition to our ration, and for a short while a number tried their hands at making their own porridge in dixies for breakfast. Completed with sugar and condensed milk, this proved to be a substantial help. Roots of stunted desert growth made sufficient fire, while an empty biscuit tin 16"x16"x20" approx. cut open kept the heat in and fire sufficiently concealed when dug into the ground. The boys are certainly past masters when it comes to improving shelters and variations of our limited rations.

Of our engagement, from which we are now resting, yet in a position from which we can be called straight into the next fray, I propose to tell a little. The whole episode, seemingly lasting a lifetime instead of some fifty hours of unceasing Hell, was far too gruesome. Our boys, fit and well trained, eager and excited to get going, acquitted themselves remarkably well. Except for a certain initial nervousness, from coming so suddenly, while still dark, into such concentrated shell and machine gun fire, but being soon swept on by the apparent

enthusiasm and determination of their fellows, they advanced as though (so the Tommies marvelled) there were no Italian bullets made that would harm us. Being rather dubious as to how I would fare when put to this gruelling test, I was pleased to find myself calm, in fact calmer than most, and can thank God for the miracle of getting through those two days and nights without losing a single life even though there were men falling everywhere around us, many of our officers included. Unfortunately a number of the Platoon were taken away wounded but all, I think, can be patched up. Luckily I came out with only a slight shrapnel wound to the hand and am already well on the mend.

The action had the effect of sobering and hardening us all considerably, and although very few would care to go through a similar performance in spite of a highly successful outcome, realising now, perhaps for the first time, the grim futility of all this war, all are yet prepared to go on and do what they consider to be, but their duty.

A little later, the Australian entirely came into his own. A grim and unrelenting fighter, the Digger yet revels in his bit of plunder. It was during later "mopping up" expeditions, that a lighter side was revealed. Being now only too eager to surrender, hundreds of Italians had to abandon all their worldly possessions - so picture our boys helping themselves to automatic pistols galore, compasses, good field glasses, many culinary luxuries and souvenirs of all kinds. Raiding an Officers' Mess, the boys revelled in tasting many fine Italian wines, carrying off as much plunder as they could manage. Even I, in the futile role of checking their lustful ways, and trying to get them on with the job in hand, setting a solitary example, was presented with a good pair of Zeiss Binoculars and a .38 Pistol. One, knowing my weakness, even carried a bottle of lemon cordial, and ever since my water bottle has provided me with a most refreshing lemon drink. Organised looting followed later in which great Deisel trucks and dozens of motor cycles were driven away, while our own hot meal a day is invariably spiced with Italian macaroni stew and soups. My platoon truck, officially sent off with empty tins for water, came back with cases of Italian tinned foods, a most useful reserve and change from Bully. Rice, split peas, to be turned into pea soup with our own tinned bacon and macaroni, were carried off by the bag. However, even in this gay finale to a grim, smoke and dust laden battle field, one cannot quite forget the funeral operations that followed. It is hard to forget that three officers with whom I gaily chatted at midnight, by a truck, just prior to the attack, along with many others are now dead. Two of these I knew well right from our Greta days. Of the five Officers in our Coy, there are now two, the other three being wounded. Personally I think the chances of coming through rely 75% on luck, and perhaps 25% on our good sense, soldiering and judgement. However, lets hope I am among the lucky ones. I have every confidence in my own ability to pull through and after this recent battle have all my men steadfastly behind me.

Cheerio,

Ralph.

26th January, 1941

"Today, our Padre reminded us during a Company Church Service this morning, is Anniversary Day, to be celebrated back home by a public holiday. We too, for the first time since leaving our last camp in Egypt, are enjoying a well

earned rest.

This scene is not unlike any about Middle Harbour for our Bn. is camped on a small peninsular, bounded on three sides by a blue and peaceful Mediterranean. On a rise slightly inland the white ensign flutters proudly in the breeze, signifying that the township and surrounding defences of Tobruck have fallen into the hands of the barbaric Australians, aided in their sweeping attack by various English technical units. At least 20,000 Italian prisoners can testify to our storm trooping tactics, and one Dago Officer enquiring about our future plans, when being told that the Australians would soon invade Italy exclaimed, "Mussolini mafish" (meaning finished.) Such is their impression of the enthusiastic and determined Australian soldiers, on the surface at least, just bursting for a fight.

This time we played a slightly different role, being actively engaged in preparing for the show, which gave me many precarious night patrols to see through uncomfortably close to Tony's wire and defences. All the boys played their part well and, aided by an excellent oil prismatic, I got each party out and back to schedule. Casualties were no so high in our units, but many fell on two occasions in my own Platoon, and within ten yards of me, blown up beyond recognition by high explosive shell fire. Minefields and booby traps accounted for many others. Still my luck continues, and hand is healing fast.

Just now the boys interrupted me to take a group shot of them with an Italian camera and film (ours being back at base) - all were dressed in various Italian naval costumes, and being already quite merry on Cognac, and wine, it was not hard to catch a characteristic attitude. Although mid-winter, the majority have indulged in a cleansing swim, while some have managed to commandeer an odd assortment of boats. We have had an ample supply of water, enabling shirts, not changed for weeks, to be thoroughly boiled. All my collection of dirty clothes was given a rare treat today and washed by the batman while I did some mending, and darned sox.

Imagine a heavily laden clothesline being supported by two Bren gun tripods - impromptu wash basins - many of them Italian aluminium dixies, were in evidence everywhere. Even I shaved yesterday, scraping off seven days' growth, since every drop of our water-bottleful a day had to be put to a more vital use.

Phyllis's cake and your enclosed handkerchiefs and a parcel from Peter and Betty came to light yesterday, soon after we had taken up this position. The handkerchiefs were most acceptable. At present many of our meals are supplemented with the contents of Christmas parcels and goods from the Canteen, just made available, and together with captured Italian delicacies we are living quite high - wish it would last for a while.

Kind regards and thanks again,
Ralph

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