

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

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Editor: Clare Kinsella  
Asst. Grace Jolly  
Bus. Manager: Alex Colley

Production: Yvonne Rolfe  
Asst. Alice Wyborn  
Subscriptions: Marie Kinsella.

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S U M M E R

by

MICHAEL DELARCHE

Into the chasmed streets  
Of the stifling Town.  
The sun's hot ardour beats  
Unpitying down!  
Slowly time's hour-glass spills  
And the long day drags  
O my heart is sick for the hills  
And the naked crags!  
I would barter a thousand days  
For a wild hour's space  
On the stark and perilous ways  
Of the sheer rock-face;  
The great peaks soar, afar  
From the Towns' hot glare:  
There silence and solitude are,  
And my heart is there.

From John O'Loneon's Weekly.

NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL PARK AND POINT LOOKOUT  
GUY FAWKES PLATEAU

J. V. TURNER.

The writer has often felt that he should like to contribute an article to these pages on some of his experiences since residing at Armidale in the beautiful New England District of N.S.W., but has hesitated on the score of (inter alia) his lack of ability to adequately describe the sheer beauty of some of this countryside, apart from many interesting episodes worthy of recording for the pleasure of others.

As I wrote to someone recently, wherever one looks, particularly during this Spring-time of the year, it appears like a canvas from the hand, nay the heart and mind of some Master Artist, as indeed, according to the Ecclesiastics, it certainly is!

However I am now impelled to put pen to paper, not about the New England generally, but of a recent sojourn to and in the famous New England National Park, in the hope that even as inadequate as the description shall be, it may have sufficient merit to perhaps persuade some folk who have not already been there, to go and see for themselves, something of the beauty and interest which are to be found within this area.

So, finding myself free one Sunday from the usual V.D.C. duties I accepted an offer from my C.O., who had business out that way, for a lift for part of the journey. We left Armidale early one typical New England Spring morning, with the frost still white on the ground and the new growth of the Elms and the Poplars, the Maples and of all the wonderful wealth of deciduous trees shimmering in the early sunlight and drove East along the Grafton Road, passing in quick succession, Commissioners Water, Gara River and the turns-off to Metz and Hillgrove. These two last-named are old mining settlements, the latter once boasting a population of 6000-7000 people, now however merely a ghost town, but still with its spectacular Gorge.

We soon passed through Wollomombi, another erstwhile important settlement, it too with its famous Gorge, resembling Hillgrove.

Here, crossing the Chandler River, the road splits; South East down the Big Hill to George's Creek, the Macleay River and Kempsey. North East over the Snowys to Ebor, the Nymboida and Clarence Rivers and Grafton, not forgetting of course the turn-off to Dorriggo and down the beautiful Mountain of that name, to the equally beautiful Bellinger River.

We took the N.E. turn and passed through sleepy little Yooroonah. (I love the names of lots of these small country settlements, many comprising part of station properties after which they are named; Waioma is another) A halt was necessary to pass through the gate in the dog-proof fence. We were now in the "Falls" country where the precipitous nature of the terrain makes an effective natural barrier, supplementing the fence.

Next we climbed the Snowys, over which the road crosses at 5000 feet, close by being the Ebor Falls. By the way Armidale is about 3600 ft.

My "hitch-hike" ended at the turn-off to The New England National Park and Point Lookout. Naturally it was good to leave the car and once again to feel the pressure of the rucksack upon one's shoulders and the delightful crunch of mother earth beneath one's boots. We all know what it is, this feeling of elation at one's own efforts to "get there" and on this day I sensed it to the full.

All was at peace with the World (for me at any rate) as I started on the 9 mile jaunt to the Lookout.

When on my own my thoughts invariably fly to such philosophers as may be found in those peerless essays on the out-of-doors of Keats, Stevenson and others. Grayson's "The Friendly Road" etc.. There is something incomparably satisfying about one's own company on occasions and this was such a one.

Unfortunately, I was rudely awakened from my lonesomeness by the droning overhead of a multi-engined Bomber, which brought one back to the stern realities of life. But only momentarily. It is a gratifying feature that the very swiftness with which these disturbances come upon one, is the means by which they are so quickly dispelled. That Bomber wasn't losing any time.

The Guy Fawkes Plateau, along which I was travelling, is a remarkable piece of country. Of varying width, it extends for some miles and carries a number of Selections, mostly cattle, some dairying and at the end of it all the New England National Park. It is flat to undulating country but of course very elevated and one thus receives a great surprise when, perhaps rounding a bend there before one is a fast flowing stream, apparently coming from - and going to - nowhere.

The first I came upon could not be said to be aesthetically named. Bullock Creek, the sign-board said. Well whether bullocks frequented it or not, I was easily tempted to quench my thirst and believe you me, that water was like all the streams hereabouts, super Al. You know, like any of the cascading waters of the upper streams of our Blue Mountains and that is enough recommendation.

There are many of these streams, some more interestingly named than Bullock. The Serpentine is one of the largest, while the Styx and Little Styx are entrancing in their loveliness. All trout streams of course. The Little Styx has been put to a very useful purpose by being harnessed as a hydro-electric scheme for a timber mill on the Plateau. I was fortunate in having an opportunity to see the complete scheme in operation and to one uninitiated in Hydro-electric works, it made a particularly interesting diversion. Fortunately for the scenic welfare of the locality, Mr. Cooper, the Mill Proprietor has definite views on aesthetic values and one left with an assured feeling that what at present is somewhat of an eyesore will in time be converted into harmonious keeping with its beautiful surroundings.

Leaving the Little Styx, I was soon actually in the Park itself.

Well, to describe this place, with its tropical loveliness, its flora and fauna of all description, its rushing streams, is just beyond me, suffice it to say, that if at all, it is only excelled by the magnificence of Point Lookout, which I was presently to reach. The track leads up a stiff incline through tall timber, giving no indication of what is in store for one, until suddenly there bursts upon one a panorama as breathtaking as it is colossal.

Spread out before one is a view - well (without wishing to draw comparisons) think of several Splendour Rocks, rolled into one. The head waters of the Bellinger, the Hastings, the Macleay, the Nambucca in a splendid array. Away to the East the Pacific rolls in on the many beaches within view while close at hand one glimpses entrancing little "intimate" views, I call them, of various settlements nestling in the valleys immediately below, with the lower settled reaches of the Bellinger all contributing to a never-to-be-forgotten scene. I hope by the way that my enthusiasm has not run away with me. I must say that the day was apparently a suitable one, because I learn that the view is not always thus. However, as in all other aspects of life, one has to take pot luck on that.

I left the place with a sort of feeling of bewilderment, firmly resolved that I should endeavour to make an "Official" Club walk out of it and so it is that the current programme shows it set down for Xmas-New Year vacation.

My next port of call was "The Moseleys" for as such has Cliff Moseley's Dairy Farm (he claims it to be the highest Dairy Farm in the Commonwealth by the way) come to be affectionately known to those fortunate S.B.W's and others who have been there. One could not, I think, pay a greater tribute to Cliff and his wife than to say that in my opinion, they are the Carlons of the Guy Fawkes. They have a lot of time for Bushwalkers, let me here record, and are ever ready to make welcome and to assist with their knowledge of this country, any folk who drop along that way. I stayed the night at the Moseley's home and the only fault I have to find is like other folk of their kind, one becomes so engrossed in a walter of interesting talk, that time is forgotten and next morning one finds the blankets an overwhelmingly comfortable sort of place. So it was during conversation that I suggested the idea of my "Official" and Cliff generously volunteered to accompany the party well on its way down to the Bellinger, pointing out places of interest and (whisper it folks!) to actually "pack" on his pony such of our gear as we may find a bit too onerous for the adequate enjoyment of the journey.

I left the Moseleys, the New England National Park and Point Lookout with joyful feelings that a man is privileged to associate with such people and such country and that D.V. it would not be the last time I should again travel those parts.

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"WINGEN" by Allan Wyborn

As the club has the intention of visiting this spot shortly, a brief description of this geological "freak" would seem opportune at this time.

The word "Wingen" is the Hunter Valley aboriginal name for "fire", but the 800 feet hill is better known as the Burning Mountain, unique in Australia and probably the world.

The first white man to see it was a Dr. Little, in 1826. The smoke he saw rising from the hillside appeared little different from an ordinary small bushfire, but the blacks with him expressed their fear of the place and would not accompany him when he went to investigate.

It is situated among the mountains about 90 miles north west of Newcastle, 12 miles north from Scone and just opposite the huge bulk of Mt. Murrumbidgee, 4171 ft.

The combustion extends over a small area of the summit of a group of hills which divides the Valley of the Kingdom Ponds from that of Page's River. The fact has long been established that the Burning Mountain is the combustion of the Greta coal seam which here extends to a great depth.

Sulphurous blue smoke ascends from vents and cracks in the sandstone crust, the widest crack being about a yard. The sandstone has also subsided in steps in the wake of the fire, some to a depth of over 20 feet proving that the coal seam here is very thick. The margins of the cracks where the fire now is, are lined with efflorescent crystals of sulphur. The ground indeed is too hot to stand on for long, although no sign of coal can be seen.

One of the reasons why the seam has been burning so long is that it was tilted by some geological action at about 60° to the horizontal, thus allowing for ventilation. Of latter years the fire has been gradually declining, and this is believed either due to the seam changing to a horizontal direction, or being out by a basaltic dyke about 30 feet wide which is running in the

Direction of the mountain.

The distance over which the fire can be traced as having moved is about a mile and three quarters, and at this distance from the main fire a small fire is still burning at what is called the Little Burning mountain. This leads to the idea that the fire started in the middle and worked in two directions, and along these lines the lowest estimate of the duration of the fire is 1500 years, but it probably started at some period before the birth of Christ.

The origin of the fire will never be known; it must remain a deep mystery of this ancient continent of ours - as mysterious as the origin of the bunyip tradition.

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MT. SHIVERING by Frank Leyden

"It was a ball as big as that, that broke in one of the bearings of the bus just a while ago. We can't replace it. Otherwise we could easily have taken you down to the Valley tonight."

"Cosgrove! You're to blame for this."

A long drawn out moan punctuated by a blast of steam from Puffing Billy as Mt. Shivering took up a strong defensive position behind the surging throng for Burraborang outside Camden Station. The pathetic picture of four lonely bushwalkers (one with hairy legs), deprived of transportation, presented itself, as one by one the three over-packed cars drove off. Low gurgling of derision from Billy as dark night closed down on the scene of the tragedy.

But no! History is made at night! Feverish plotting by agile and cunning brains--scampering of legs to the four winds of Camden--a taxi--seven pounds to Yerranderie--you're one of these Blank-hikers--a garage--an empty coal truck going to the Burraborang.

"Put the ground sheet down."

"The coal dust is in my eyes."

"It's in my pack. It's in my shirt."

"It's in everything."

"Better to stand up and hold on to the top of the cab."

A veritable blizzard of coal dust as Mt. Shivering approached at 50 m.p.h. Four determined bushwalkers hung on like mice to a mouse-trap-- bent, bettered, bumped, bruised and blasted on the back of a powerful coal truck that sped like a black meteor into the night. The big dipper, ski descent from Mt. Tate-- all were compared in croaking falsetto voices as the icy blasts penetrated the pulmonaries. Arrived at the Burraborang the four blackened figures wended their way to the river and, after the usual ceremony of finding a camp spot, settled down for the night.

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"That will cost you a shilling."

"Gilroy will pay for it. We'll walk on. She might want to charge a shilling each, That's the worst of these motor camps."

"We'll walk to the Upper Burraborang, Might be able to get on the Yerranderie mail car there."

"Keep our shirts on. We might get a lift."

"No, it's too hot."

Burraborang valley was beautiful in the early morning sunshine. The river was wide and fast, the fields green with fresh spring crops. Amid the

crunching of boots on gravel, the clicking of cameras and the casting of aspersions, the eight miles were rapidly culminated.

After a salutary visit to the local inn (no home made bread kept) and sundry ablutions in the murky river (after due consideration), the Yerranderie mail car at last arrived. It was packed with passengers, bread, meat, mail etc. and the top was piled high with luggage. So perforce we draped ourselves on the running boards, muttering the usual sayings such as "Good job Johno isn't here", etc.

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"Best view in N.S.Wales. Can see Newcastle from the top."

We thrilled as we heard Mt. Shivering described by one of the locals, and carefully listened to a description of how to get there. So after a careful study of the map, we climbed over the back of Yerranderie Peak, lost the track, climbed the wrong ridge, found and lost the right and wrong tracks many times, wandered willy-nilly through the bush (Coolong Maze on the map) until we arrived at Coolong station. From there we followed the track over Barallier Pass.

"I'm not going a step further in the dark. I'm going to camp at the first water."

"Just down here a bit, Bill".

"We're all tired. No use going any further."

"Big day tomorrow".

"Here's water. This'll do."

"Don't put your pack down until Bill puts his down."

"Lie on the ground Bill, See which way your feet go so we can put the tent up."

"Frank's going to make the Alpine Hut Ridding. None of this for you Arthur; unless of course we have too much."

"Wouldn't touch the vile stuff."

"Where's Colin Lloyd?"

"He's lying down resting before he has the pudding."

"Gee! the stew was good. Why don't you bring some decent food out with you Arthur? You'll die of starvation. Aha! here's the pudding. Isn't it good? What do you think of that Arthur?"

"Rotten tack."

"Well I like that. Fancy calling our pudding that!"

"Having coffee, Bill?"

"No room. I'm going to bed. Where's a stick so I can dig a big hole."

Flying in clods in all directions a la rooster scratching, as hip hole is excavated in the mud.

And so next day to Bindook via BILL COSGROVE'S TRACK (see map). Bindook was originally Band Hook as the fish were so large in the creek (Aboriginal Folk-lore). Having obtained directions from Mr. Lang, we turned north; crossed the Gap and followed up a swampy creek leading to the Mt. Shivering ridge. The Oberon Stock Route follows this ridge.

"We ought to be soon at Mt. Shivering."

"Unless we've passed it."

"There's been a wonderful forest all the way this trip."

"We don't want to be Bonnum Piced again." (On the Easter trip we had missed bonnum Pic by a few hundred yards on account of the time.)

Shivering lived up to its name. A piece of paper on the trig told who hadn't been there. We didn't see Newcastle. So after descending the basalt mass we resumed our way to the Big Flat. Spring Ridge is good walking,

but neither easy to find nor to follow. Towards the end, and just before the final descent to the river, a number of peaks (The Hellions) rise up like King Mr. The immense chasma of the upper Kowmung is seen from here in all its splendour. Leading down to the river the ridges were clothed with yellow everlasting and wattle as though they were aflame. The river itself was exceedingly beautiful -- wide and deep, fast flowing, crystal clear and icy cold. Primitive and unspoiled, it merits preservation if anything is ever preserved.

"Is Arthur across yet? Can't see in the dark."

His pack is all wet "

"Sticks are no good, the current is too strong."

"Have to go slow, the rocks are slippery."

"No use crossing any more in the dark. Camp here."

"Back where the grass is."

"What's Arthur cooking? Those smelly chops! What are you burning them like that for? Flames everywhere?"

"He's lying on his stomach eating them now, with two lighted candles in front of him."

"We'll pack up and get away at five in the morning, no time for breakfast before we go."

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Next morning at seven a.m. after a good breakfast, we set off at full speed down the river, more in the water than out of it and in the nettles. Time was short. We had to meet the Yerranderie mail car at noon. So we decided to go to Lannigan's creek.

"Lannigan's creek is easily recognised."

"There's a straight part of the Kowmung just after the bend at Waterfall Creek."

We should have been at Lannigan's long ago."

"The map must be wrong, get your compass out."

"I've been just above Church Creek and this part looks familiar."

"We've been walking two hours, we must be nearly at Church Creek, that's what it is."

"Cosgrove! And you've been here before too! Won't get home tonight now. What are we going to do?"

"Try this ridge, good as anything. We might be lucky."

"Here's a track. Look! There's Coalong. And there's Church creek. Should easily make it now."

We followed the track up Harmer's Ridge to Squatting Rock Gap and then down Tonallid creek to just below the Post Office at Yerranderie. Before leaving the creek we had "a clean up". Bill and Arthur went on to the Post Office to hold the car. There was no particular hurry as mail cars are always late. We were constantly assured of this, and constant repetition is infallible, or is it? As we arrived, two excited figures rushed out

of the Post Office waving arms and shouting incoherently.

"The car's gone! The car's gone! Missed it by fifteen minutes."

"O yeah, Coogrove's little joke."

Circumstances however showed that the facts had been given without equivocation in the first statement.

"The car's gone all right and we 're stranded 'n all."

"It's a wicked world."

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YOUR SOCIAL CALENDAR

for

FEBRUARY AND MARCH

25th February

Mr. J. McRorie with the aid of his  
Movie Camera, will show us what is  
being done by the National Fitness  
Council for the Youth of Australia.

11th-12th March

ANNUAL RE-UNION

24th March

Lecture - Mr. Miles Dunphy.

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A woman visitor to the London Zoo asked a keeper  
whether the hippopotamus was a male or female.  
"Madam," replied the keeper sternly, "that is  
a question that should be of interest only to  
another hippopotamus."

-----Julian Huxley.



## M E A N D E R I N G S

A It seems to be a little late to be writing of the Christmas holidays, but this is our first opportunity as the January issue of the magazine had to be prepared before Christmas.

The weather in all respects favoured the campers, and those who came through unscathed from Mr. Hartigan's Christmas Course for Comandos at Central, reported very enjoyable trips.

Era, which is most "get-at-able" for those people who do not have a long break at Christmas time, was very popular again this year, though a trifle hot for some folk who were therefore, rather taken by surprise.

Blue Gum Forest entertained a few parties. The President who was there for the New Year found quite a few young trees and fixed things for them to grow up the right way. Those who simply love rowing, took themselves to Erskine Creek. Down south, Yeola called, and many answered and a few more walkers looked up Meryla again.

Mr. Dibley and Mr. Cotter walked around Kosciusko way and listen son it was good.

Someone who was at Era, tells of a storm that came down one night on the overcrowded settlement. Above the sound of the rain came the noise of many scrapings. Peering from her tent she saw hundreds of hands apparently disembodied, frantically digging trenches. Aftermath of above storm. Pathetic scene at creek side, reminiscent of earliest evacuation pictures when hordes of Bushwalkers endeavoured to identify the hopelessly mixed butters and jellies which had been swept by the storm from their carefully chosen crannies and hurled into a comradely gathering at the bottom of the creek.

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A certain Bachelor in the club was asked by a certain Benedict in the club, if he was going to take his girl friend on a canoing trip. "Oh No", said the Bachelor, shocked to the core, "Far too dangerous". Then said the married one, "But I am taking H----a". "Yes, but that is different" said the Bachelor, "She is a Wife." We trust H. will not make too much fuss if the canoe overturns, but will remember in time that she is only wife, not a friend.

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Jean tells us that her Tom has been awarded a Bar to his D.F.C. Congratulations etc. to you Tom.

Bill Cawood has returned to Sydney after being a prisoner of war in Germany. Remembering Rene Brown's partiality for tea he thoughtfully bought a couple of pounds for her in Ceylon. We hope he looks in at the Club soon. Bill is the first Bushwalker prisoner of war to return to Sydney we believe.

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This month's nice thought. "A Bachelor is a negligible mass of obstinacy entirely surrounded by suspicion."

## AT OUR OWN MEETING

Marie Byles announced that it had been found that the Valuer General's Valuation of lot 7 Era was £6 per acre and not £10 per acre as the owners informed us. It was thought that the owners were under a genuine misapprehension, but it would be necessary to apply for a revaluation or come to a

new agreement before the Treasurer's consent could be obtained for the purchase.

It was resolved that the Club would be prepared to accept gifts from individuals or organisations outside the Club on the understanding that such gifts do not give the donors or organisations they represent any claim to the management of the area.

Russell Wilkins and Peter Jones were elected Room Stewards.

The next meeting of the Recreational Areas Subcommittee of the National Fitness Council will discuss representations for the resumption of the Era lands. Marie Byles has been asked to attend to give the Clubs views. For her guidance it was resolved that the Club favours resumption of all the land between Garrwarra Park and National Park provided that it be used for recreational purposes, and that the North Era area, including lot 7 be reserved for camping.

In view of the fact that Morella Karong is now part of the new Heathcote Creek Reservation it was decided to discontinue payment of the annual rental, thereby forfeiting the lease. This course was suggested by the Lands Dept. in an interview.

John Hunter was elected as Federation delegate to replace Ray Kirkby, who has been transferred to Brisbane.

The Walks Secretary appealed for leaders for 9 one-day and three week-end walks on the next programme.

Reg Alder moved that "The action taken by certain members in regard to indecent and obscene behaviour at Era was ill considered and not in the best interests of the walking movement." He explained that the Federation had reported to the Police Dept. that nude bathing was taking place at North Era and had asked for a policeman to be sent to the area. Police had been sent at New Year and had found two Club Members sun bathing in the nude in a secluded place. This was a serious matter for the members concerned, and their action was quite harmless. It was not the wish of the Club members that such action be taken and before taking it the Club should have been consulted. The result of the Federations letter should have been foreseen.

The motion was discussed at length. Bill Hall agreed with the motion saying that the action was ill-considered, but the harm was done now and our main concern should be to prevent the police from taking action against the members concerned and, if necessary to defray any legal expenses on their behalf. Ruby Payne-Scott said that the police should not have been called in. It had been suggested that the youths whose behaviour had led to the complaint to the police were members of an association. If so the association should have been approached or the youths themselves approached directly. Frank Duncan said the matter should have been referred to the Club. He pointed out the need for tolerance and humour in these matters, pointed to the advance in ideas on nude bathing, and recalled the time when certain Club members had been very wrath because photographs had been passed round in which were shown members with bare chests. Dorothy Lawry said the question was not that of nude bathing, but of offending the public. This had been the purpose of the old regulation requiring members to wear shirts in the vicinity of houses. There was no harm in nude bathing in secluded places and there had to be trust and understanding in these matters in some situations. North Era was not a secluded place and was in view of Governor Game Lookout. Wal Roots agreed that we should keep our sense of humour. It was easy to be wise after the event. The report to the Police had been made in perfect good faith and it was unwise to blame the Federation officials. Alex Colley said that the motion

read like a vote of censure. He pointed to the great volume of business dealt with by the Federation at its last meeting and doubted whether any member present would have brought up any objections had they been present. However delegates should consult the Club whenever possible unless the matter required urgent action. Mouldy Harrison said that the two Members caught had been doing something not complained of. The matter had awakened a sense of responsibility, decency and pride in the Club. Marie Byles said that a member had complained that certain youths had exposed themselves in indecent attitude and had sneaked up when girls had been undressing. A draft of the letter had been approved by the Federation without dissent. A Police Inspector had informed her that probably no action would be taken. The complaint had been not against nude bathing, but against indecent behaviour. Annis Duncan did not think that the bringing of a policeman to Era would improve the morals of the young. Dave Stead thought that calling the Police down might mean that a lot of our members would be kept away from Era. There could be no conviction if the bathers could be seen only from such a distance as Governor Game Lookout. Renee Brown said that the suggested action had been announced by the President at the last meeting. Everybody had tacitly approved. The disagreement should have been brought up then. Reg Alder in reply said that many people had been wise before the event. The results of the Federation's action had been anticipated by many at Era a week before it happened. He said that delegates should consult members on any matter not stated in the objects of the Club as set out in the Constitution. The Club was now the laughing stock of Era and Helensburgh.

The motion was defeated, but it was decided, on a motion by Bill Hall that the Club would pay for competent Council, if necessary.

The Business Manager of the Magazine said that as both Fifi Kinsella who looked after subscriptions and himself would be unable to continue with their work, the Magazine Committee would be pleased to know of anybody who would take over these duties for the magazine. Another job was that of reporting Club and Federation meetings.

#### FEDERATION NOTES

A new Reserve has been dedicated for Public recreation. It includes most of "Miarra" and "Morella-Karong". It is about twice the size of the area asked for. The Federation is recommending two trustees, one of whom is Bill Hall.

The Youth Hostels Committee is recommending hostels and sheds in the vicinity of mountain towns. One is suggested on the Falconbridge /Grose River Ridge. The Federation recommends that this be placed near the town.

The question of the resumption of Era was mentioned in a report of the Youth Hostels Extension Committee and Dorothy Lawry advised the Federation of the action of the S.B.W. regarding lot 7 North Era. Federation resolved that the S.B.W. be asked to write to the National Fitness Council suggesting a deputation re Era to the Minister for Lands

and that the Federation write to the National Fitness Council on the matter.

The Garrawanna Park Trust reports that it may soon be possible to fence the northern boundary.

LETTERS FROM THE LADS AND LASSES

Bill Burke writes: 11.12.43. Very pleased to receive the Club's Christmas greetings the other day. I'm afraid that this letter will have to suffice from me as greeting cards are something that just don't seem to exist up here. I believe some of the units round about are printing their own. The hospital kicked me out three weeks back. They decided to turn the ward I was in, into a medical one, and had a grand clean up. Was beginning to get a bit fed up with the place, even though I was in with a particularly good crowd, so wasn't sorry to leave. The con. depot has grown on me to such an extent that I'm beginning to like the place. The first week wasn't so bright; dragging a pair of heavy, mud plastered boots around was all I could manage. The place is a loafers paradise and up to the present apart from walking on and off parades, I've devoted myself wholly or solely to punishing the cot. Of course there is a little work available for those inclined, but to be quite truthful I just haven't had the inclination. Lost a stone and a half up to arriving here but have put a lot of it back by now. For New Guinea we are being fed like kings and plenty of it too. In addition to the normal three meals morning, afternoon tea and supper are provided so you can see that we don't do too badly. The camp amenities are similar to those at the hospital with the exception of the A.E.S. The chap in charge of the latter completed his education at Oxford, has travelled widely and has given us many interesting lectures. The members of the services will, on the whole, have a much broader education and outlook than the civilian when this is all over. I've talked the Doc. into making me Al again. I'm to do a week's marching and P.T. to see if my knee will stand up to it and then I'll be off once more. Will probably spend Christmas in a staging camp somewhere. The C.O. doesn't seem to be in any hurry to discharge the chaps from here in fact just the opposite. Rather unusual for the army; the usual idea being to kill off the old hands as quickly as possible. Strangely enough the more service a chap has seen the less inclined he is to want to malingere round these areas. I was yarning with a young chap - not yet 21 - yesterday. He had escaped from Malaya after the fall of Singapore and after a spell in a base unit, had joined the commandos. Was in a hurry to get back to his mob up the Markham Valley because, to use his own words, "a man's a mug, but I feel guilty loafing around here while my mates are up top". Heard a rather amusing yarn from another chap, a member of a "spotter" group. These groups are sent to the most outlandish places for months on end and their sole duty is to report, by wireless, all hostile aircraft passing overhead. The day after he took up duty at his last station he paid a visit to a nearby village. On arrival the chief immediately mustered a selection of women for him to take his choice. A gesture of common courtesy to any visitor, white or black, to a village in the interior, so that chap told me. When he declined to select one of these the chief immediately rounded up all the young maidens, on his failure

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to take one of these, paraded his own wives - the highest honour he could pay to his visitor. The chief told the rest of the group later on that he considered him very unsociable. Broke away from the usual routine last Wednesday, and two of us roused sufficient energy to inspect a nearby rubber plantation. The chap in charge was very obliging and explained the whole business to us. I was surprised at how simple the process really is, a kid of fourteen could handle it. On the way back availed ourselves of the opportunity of getting a couple of pineapples. They were that good we went back yesterday and got a sugar bag full. I've waited a long time for that, but its well worth it. Afternoon tea's on so will say Cheerio with best wishes for some good walking and camping over the holiday season.

Peter Allen England 16.10.43. I have a letter and an Airgraph to answer and it is about time I got going. A lot of our mail must have been held up because in the last two or three weeks I have received the May, June and July issue of the Sydney Bushwalker. Other reading matter arrived including the "Walkabout" and Argosy and a tin of sweets arrived at the same time. They are very welcome as they are rationed. All we can get is 2 oz of chocolate a week. For all these things I would like to thank the Services Committee. Without such gifts from home things would indeed be very different. It is good to hear that the drought has broken. I received a paper from home giving an account of the rain. Robertson must have been washed away with 48 inches of rain. The bush must look different now, fresh and green, the creeks running etc. Won't we give it a hiding when we get back. Thanks for the photos they certainly bring back old memories. The one taken from Splendour Rock has also arrived. I have quite a lot of the Australian Bush land now and have a look through them every now and again. The typewritten airgraph letter is a big success? It is very easy to read although the typing is only about 1/16 of an inch high. I was having some photos printed to send home but ran into the same trouble as yourselves - shortage of paper. Up till now I have been lucky, this is the first time I have had no negatives returned to me. Has anything been heard of Gordon Smith yet? The Pea Picking effort must have been a great success but I'll bet it was back breaking work. I am due for leave at the end of the month and am going to Lands End and the Scilly Isles. I am hoping there is a plane flying down that waym it will save us a lof of time. We go up for a flip now and again. Went up for a test a few days ago. Reached a height of 21,000 feet, had to use oxygen but it is no different to ordinary atmosphere. When descending you have to be very careful of your ears. It is advisable to keep yawning; that relieves the uneven pressure on the ear drums. It was a cloudy day and the visibility was not very good. It never is where we are, there is always a ground mist, sometimes it is impossible to see the drome until almost over it. Well Dunk, that is all the news. I am in the best of health and hope the club members can say the same. This should arrive about Christmas so besides the usual seasonal greetings I wish everybody "good walking in the new year". With lots of luck I might be there to join them before it is over.

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DRY YOUR OWN

In these days of make do and mend, queues and ration books, we are getting used to managing for ourselves. As usual that enterprising section of the community, the bushwalkers have tackled the food question with characteristic initiative and many are overcoming the dehydrated food problem by drying their own.

Very timely then in the publication by the Victorian Department of Agriculture of a pamphlet giving full particulars of how to make a dehydrator from a few bits of three ply and another explaining the methods of dehydrating various fruits and vegetables.

Etymologists will be interested to learn from the pamphlet that that poor-relation-only-used-by-vulgar-people word "dried" has quite a distinct meaning from its high-born cousin "dehydrated". Apparently if one extracts the moisture from potatoes by exposing them to the sun, they are "dried" but if one achieves the same result in an oven they are "dehydrated". Similarly the walker having toiled in the sun up some steep mountain side might claim to be dry, but the stoker having evaporated his moisture by artificial heat would be dehydrated. But we digress --

Paddy has the pamphlets for those to see who don't wish to get their own copy.

PADDY PALLIN

Camp Gear for Walkers

327 George Street

SYDNEY

Phone B3101.