

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER.

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From

TRANSCONTINENTAL

John Thompson.

Out from the little city that chaffers and sweats;  
out from the little villas: out from their fear  
of a naked word or act: out from a soil  
vended or bought by footage: out from Perth:  
out from the suburbs and the mice they breed  
- the decorous porch, palm, lawn, and pencil pine -  
till vacant lots appear, and ragged yards,  
untidier gardens at the ends of paddocks,  
hot scrags of dogged scrub, then rusty workshops  
the last hotel, the last urban alignment.  
Out, out and up, by orchard slope and vineyard  
(where mouse might lift a fore-paw, find a hand)  
till forest hits our nostrils. Behind us now  
the patterned coastlands merge their coloured sweeps  
in argent sunlight, the city dissolves in light  
far off. But sudden crags (like petrifications  
of half-formed limbless headless nameless beings  
or spirits old as the world, round-humped, intent  
as yogis) blunt this picture out. Dry flanks  
of grey reptilian ranges, shaggy with weird  
millennial lilies and pre-adamic trees,  
press round our carriages which shake their sleep.

WALKING IN THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS

By Alex Colley

Though a number of parties of bushwalkers have been to Kosciuszko, it is shameful to relate that only two articles have appeared in the magazine on walking in these parts. Walking there is not like any of our usual trips, so this article will seek to be informative rather than narrative, for the sake of future parties. Don't, however, imagine that you are missing anything. All of my last trip that is worth hearing has already reached the microphonic ear of the Social Reporter. Other members of the staff are busy describing the scenery, but it is regretted that, owing to lack of space, the Editor was unable to publish Canopus's (pronounce "canopusses" as in "octopus's") treatise on the variable star Algol, which is seen to advantage in those parts.

As to trains, we cannot advise. The Railway Enquiry Office can tell you sometimes. Otherwise the Miner's Federation might oblige. Cars, however, are easier. There is a regular mail service to the Hotel, and a truck runs to the Chalet, 12 miles beyond. If you have a party of 4 or more it is much better to get Cecil Constance of the Garage, Berridale, via Cooma to take you. Unique amongst hire car proprietors, he answers letters. The charge is 35/- a head for a party of five.

It is best to get the car to Charlotte's Pass - 5 miles from the summit. Here you are within easy distance of the main scenic attractions. Half a mile beyond is Foreman's hut; two miles down the Snowy is Pound's Creek hut. However, if you go between December and March - the best months for walking - we would advise you not to use the huts if you can help it. The reasons?

(a) Except in bad weather the camping is a new and delightful experience. It is almost ideal because of the pure air, the artistry of colour and scene in the twilight, the warm but not hot sun, the long hours of daylight (up to 9 p.m. - sunset 7.30) and the pleasure of camping on a thick carpet of snow grass under the snow-gums.

(b) The huts are seldom tidy, usually dirty.

(c) There are usually a number of parties wandering around the tops and frequently several of them crowd into one hut. At any hour of the day or evening your peace and domestic arrangements are likely to be shattered by the arrival of a large party.

(d) It is usually more comfortable and warmer for a party of four or more if they can sit round a large camp fire.

(e) There is plenty of wood near - you don't have to carry it a long way and then chop it up.

(f) You can pluck a nice mattress of snow-grass instead of sleeping on hard boards - even without any plucking the grass is good.

(g) You can see the stars.

\* Non-contributors to the magazine are warned that there will be enough space if they don't write something themselves. Ed.

But it is necessary to be very careful in the selection of a camp site and the following precautions are recommended:

- Camp below the tree line - this usually is below 6,000 ft. Trees are some evidence that the ground does not become sodden and that the wind is broken, though perhaps only slightly.
- Camp as near as possible under the eastern lee of hills and take advantage of any protection from trees, rocks or fallen timber. Nearly all the bad weather comes from the west, but even in westerly gales there are some protected pockets.
- Fit your tent with strong guy ropes - more than twice as strong as you would trust for ordinary camping, and be sure your tent fabric is strong.
- Secure end-ropes of tent to a stake or tree.
- Place large stones over tent pegs.
- Make the fire on the eastern side of tent.
- Take candles, kerosene, or other fire-lighting aids.

Most of the time camping is quite pleasant and these precautions will appear unnecessary, but you cannot foretell when a westerly wind will spring up. Water is usually no trouble as small streams of cold sparkling water are abundant over 5,000 ft. However, it is not denied that during a spell of really bad weather the only thing to do is to take to a hut, so if you have doubts about the weather it is usually wise to camp within half a mile of a hut. We had two bad nights. Our camp site was not perfect by the above rules, because we were part way up a hill facing west, though we were well below the hill on the other side of the river. On one of these nights there was a fierce wind, accompanied by sheets of rain of cloudburst intensity. The wind would roar through the trees on the slopes of Guthrie above us. We would hear it come down towards us till a mighty hand grasped our tent, shook it from end to end and forced the sides in towards us while the kettle drum beat of the raindrops merged into one angry note. We had expected bad weather and could have gone to Foreman's. Though we several times doubted that thin layer of Willesden between us and the gale and were kept awake by the din, we didn't regret our night in the storm.

The best spot for camping near the tops is on the Snowy, about a mile below Foreman's. It would be an ideal spot for a Bushwalker hut - if -. One advantage while we were there was that we had a refrigerator in the form of a deep snow drift on the lower slopes of Twynam opposite. It kept our meat fresh for a week. From this spot you can see all the tops in one day trips. You can get to Jagungal and back or do the Dead Horse Creek-Murray-Geehi-Hannel's spur trip in three days without running much.

The walking all looks easy, because the slopes, except on the western side, are not steep and in the clear air distances and heights are halved by our ordinary visual judgment. Once we looked over the Wilkinson Valley to Kosciusko. "Let's go direct over that little

rocky gorge", we said. But wait, what are those animals a few hundred yards away, on the other side? Are they horses or cattle? They looked more like ants. Snow-grass tussocks and stony ground make the walking heavy, while the rarified air to which it takes several days to get accustomed, makes climbing an effort. We found that an average pace of about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  m.p.h. was quite enough for us except on the tourist tracks.

As to maps, we found that the Snow Leases map was reliable. If you follow it carefully with the aid of a compass you should find the routes as marked, though often there is no distinguishable track in open upland country. However, if you follow along where the map shows the track should be, you will come upon it again. On three occasions we spent half an hour or more off the track. On the first we followed the map and came on the track again; on the other occasions we just hadn't looked carefully enough at the map. It is as well to be careful and observant, because visibility may be restricted to 20 or 30 yards in bad weather.

As to clothing, it is wise to go equipped as for ski-ing - the main essentials are a waterproof jacket, long warm pants (tweed, not jaegar) and boots with hobnails. On Sat. 5th Jan. 1946, we walked in the lot on a sunny day. The temperature in Sydney was  $103^{\circ}$ .

The flies are very bad, both on the tops and below, so a fly veil and mosquito net tent are handy. The flies' hours are from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. unless it's cold or windy.

The sun, though it does not feel hot, burns much more than below. Even a good dark surfing tan won't stand up to it, so take lanoline or other protective cream.

The main points of interest, I should say, are the Summit (don't believe stories that you can't see anything from there - the view is magnificent), Sentinel Peak and Twynam, Townsend and Tate. For longer trips the Geehi - coming out via Khancoban, if it can be arranged - and Jagungal are probably the most interesting, but there are numerous other one-day and longer trips, some of which have yet to be done.

#### SOCIAL EVENTS

The REUNION on the 8th, 9th and 10th March at MOORABINDA, HEATHCOT CREEK, is, as usual, the outstanding event for the month of March. On those days, a raid will be carried out on race-courses, Penny Arcades, "pub" corners and housie-housie dens and woe betide you if you are apprehended!

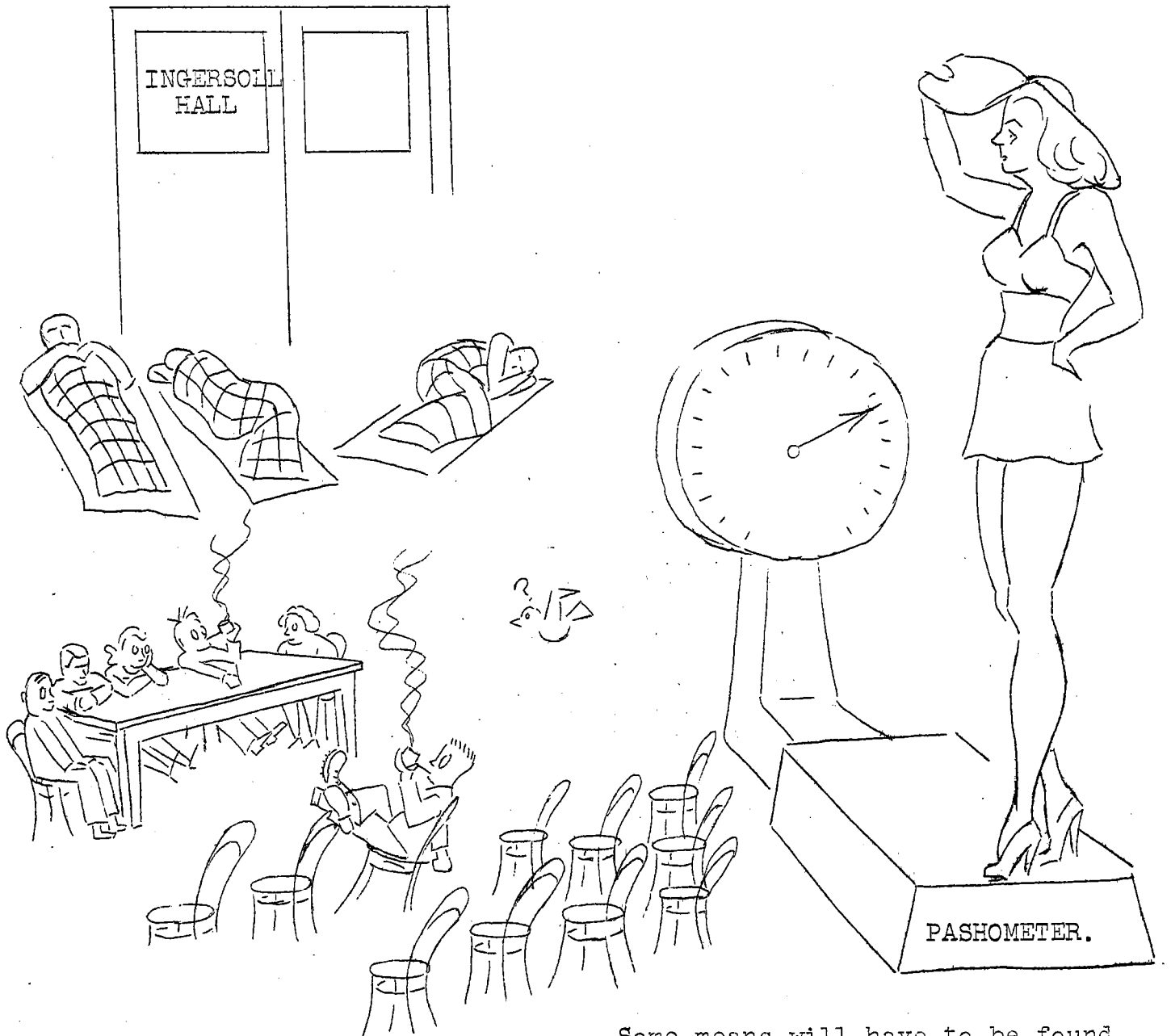
On Friday night, the 15th, Allan Wyborn will tell us about "Northern Ranges"

AND

on the 29th. there is to be a DANCE. By arrangement, light snow will be falling in Oxford Street.

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING IN MARCH THERE IS SURE TO BE SUCH  
A RUSH TO TAKE ON JOBS THAT

Candidates will sleep at the door  
overnight as at the Patrick-Burns  
"fight".



There will be so many officials that  
the worst "limelighter" will choose  
to be a private member.

Some means will have to be found  
to eliminate some of the  
candidates for Social Secretary.

HOW I GOT INTO THE "GAME"

Claude Haynes.

Jim, one of the giants of the local football team, had become a close friend of mine through Surf Club activities. The Sunday afternoon prior to a certain 6-Hour Day Public Holiday was glorious sunshine. After lunch I had adjourned to the front verandah to have a quiet read and enjoy the sun which was so pleasant that I was soon dozing more than reading and very peaceful with the world and myself in particular. On opening my eyes I saw Jim's brother Alan approaching our house. He greeted me with "Hullo Claude. You remember about twelve months ago that you told Jim that the next time he went on a walk to let you know as you also were keen on the sport?" Immediately came to my mind some hazy recollection that in a skiting mood I had made some such proposal. Not to be outfaced, I bravely answered, "That does me. What do I take?" Alan replied, "Rucksack, 2 blankets, spuds, cheese, honey, beans, plate, spoon, fork, knife and cup". This seemed pretty slender equipment to me for three days and two cold nights in the bush, but I said "O.K." with a great deal of doubt hidden behind my external firmness.

Having committed myself to the venture which was only six days distant, I had to devote myself to some plan of preparation to at least put up some sort of a show. I accordingly phoned an old friend of mine, whom I knew to be an expert at the sport. He soon convinced me that hiking (or "walking" as he called it) was no ordinary sport. It was a battle against Nature, sometimes in the most violent form and he thought that Alan's list of requirements somewhat under-rated the enemy. He spoke of tents, sleeping bags, ground sheets, spare singlet, proper shoes, snake bite outfit etc. vaseline for sore feet, matches and candle, in fact everything down to the key of the house so that I could let myself in on my return. Besides this he tendered valuable advice on the virtue of travelling lightly weighted, digging hip holes, putting my spare pair of trousers underneath when retiring at night, as it is just as important to have as much under one as on top. These hints were eagerly accepted by me - you see, Alan and Jim thought I was an expert and I therefore had to acquire knowledge fast.

The final arrangements were that we sleep at Alan's the night before our departure (Alan's wife being absent in the country) and pack. Soon after my arrival at his home I could see that both my companions were very keen amateur photographers, but, as far as Alan was concerned, he was an amateur only because the Dept. of Information and Life Magazine had not snapped up his services. When discussing photography he wore a very worried look but internally was elated. He showed me some of his masterpieces. "Could I not see the composition in his pictures, etc. etc.?" I casually mentioned that a friend of mine had recently shown me a stereoscopic contraption, which was like looking at the actual scene. This sent my host off on a line of thought about third dimensions and a lot of other stuff that was beyond me. It was now 12.30 a.m. but he asked me if I should like to read the American Photographic Society Journal of 1938 before retiring. Jim came to my rescue suggesting a cup of tea and then to bed. This was carried

unanimously (or 2 to 1 any way) and we all plunged into the absent wife's double bed. At 2.30 a.m. Alan sneaked out of bed and I heard a few bumps out in his hobby room. Goodness, thought I, he must have over-exposed or under-baked a film or something and have suddenly remembered it. He did not return. In the morning he protested that when Jim stopped snoring I commenced and it was too much for his artistic temperament.

Our starting place was Robertson, a small township on the Southern Highlands. From the Railway Station you can see the once famous Ranelagh Hotel, whose downfall was the mountain mists and changeable weather of this district. The guest golfers would find themselves away out on the links when the mists would envelop them and the only "strike" they had was a sit down one until the mists passed.

I enquired of a country-looking chap about a short cut leading to the main track, and he replied, "I am going down that way very shortly and if you like I will give you a lift in the truck". I blurted out my acceptance, but then he finished, "I am going over to the pub to have a drink first". Jim and I accompanied him (Alan being already out snooping for shots). On the way to the pub we were joined by several of the driver's acquaintances who were all in at the "kill". We then boarded the waggon (somewhat against our professional pride, oh yea!) and were instructed to seat ourselves on the wheat meal which was being transported to the local piggery. Alan tasted it and assured me that it was the germ of the wheat, first class quality as the pigs get only the best. My early morning breakfast fears that he was a student of diet as well as photography were now confirmed and, as my nominee, he was there and then elected cook for the trip, a position he thankfully accepted.

At last we touched the earth with the intention of walking on it. Are all walkers and photographers like this? I wondered. What is it like when you get started? Well, I am still walking.

#### ANNUAL MEETING - 8th MARCH.

Were you an Office-bearer of the Club, are you an Office-bearer, will you be an Office-bearer? If not, why not? Answer on the Annual night. It must not be said of you

"And even so, he's stale, he's been there too long.  
Touch him, and you'll find he's all gone inside  
just like an old mushroom, all wormy inside, and hollow  
under the smooth skin and an upright appearance."

At the February meeting the Club approved of the suggestion that a small room, at a cost not exceeding ten shillings per week, be rented in order, primarily, to house the Club's duplicator. Such a room, however, could be used to advantage for other activities of the Club and might in time blossom into a comfortable meeting place for walkers.

The essential qualification for the room (apart from cheapness!) is ready access any night. Has anyone any ideas?

THE NEWS - E. & O.E.ALMA MATER AT CHARLOTTE'S PASS

When Mr. Constance vaguely waved a telegram at Charlotte Pass upon arriving to pick up a recent party, he was nearly knocked backwards into the Snowy River in the rush. It contained life-and-death news for the Blue Stockings. (I apologise. I have since learnt that the colour was due to the cold). Doreen Helmrich and Christa Calnan both appeared in print in the "Herald" in the University Results.

Those who languished at home awaiting results were Jean Thirgood and Fifi Kinsella. Fifi distinguished herself by tying for first place in her year in Law. Well, I hope the Club will soon be bad enough to warrant two honorary solicitors.

Tom Herbert has an addition to the family - a girl. In a few years time she will be able to keep the family place in the meat queue.

HOT NEWS. Betty Pryde has become engaged and is to be married within the week. Fast work, indeed, but her mentor, I believe, is from "The States".

Shirley and Russell went to the Kowmung with Clem as chaperone. Russell returned with feet almost crushed beyond recognition. Shirley tried to annihilate Clem with a big boulder but missed through aiming at the right person.

The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt palls before the present trek out of Sydney. Two-storey, modern, furnished homes must be available now for twenty five shillings a week.

We are sorry to lose Roy Davies who has returned to Melbourne, though why, we have not yet been able to discover. Roy was treasurer this year, but the auditor's certificate is not yet to hand.

Shortly the Hunters are off to New Zealand which must make some of us a little envious. John now has the opportunity of being the first man to climb Mt. Cook carrying a baby girl.

Peter Jones and Roy Edser are somewhere in Tasmania by now (transport permitting) on one of the many trips - walking and canoeing - which they hope to accomplish. Canoeing in Tasmania is so much easier - if you capsize, all you have to do is jump on the nearest iceberg.

The Nobles have a daughter. Yes, she is extraordinarily wonderful etc. Grace greeted her on her arrival with the astonishing statement, "You need more than five valves to get sufficient amplification". Being somewhat backward, I did not know that pre-kindergarten training commences at such an early age.

THE MILLENIUM - IT HAS ARRIVED.

To the profound relief of all walkers, we are able to report that there is now a bus which purports to run on the following route: "Blackheath, Golf Links, Govett's Leap, Neate's Glen, Grand Canyon and Evan's Lockout". A double-decker bus turned over in Sydney recently trying to do much less.



MT. ERICA - SOUTHERN ALPS

Dot English.

Dawn on Saturday saw us racing for the train, and about midday the nine of us disembarked at Moe which, if you look at the map, you will find lurking on the southern edge of that great expanse of mountain range country which includes Hotham and Feathertop and the high plateaux of the Southern Alps. A further 30 miles by service car brought us to Parker's Corner, where our packs were unloaded from the car beside a fine crop of blackberries on which those of us who hadn't eaten on the train browsed enthusiastically while the party changed into its respective shorts and looked at maps and organised itself for the climb up Mt. Erica (5020 ft.).

We followed the road to a high trestle bridge over which a narrow gauge railway line ran to a timber mill, and then followed up the railway line itself, turning off when we came to the steep track which runs up Mt. Erica, through forests of incredibly tall mountain ash, whole hillsides of dead stark white trunks still standing to show the ravages of the 1939 bushfires. Maurice the young and spry, giving it as an excuse that he needed to work off city repressions, would go cavorting off the track to push over such dead trees as looked pushable. It was all great fun. An English boy in the party remarked on the fact that in England dead trees in a forest are rare - being of softer wood, when they die they rapidly decay and fall to the ground where they lie like Christians, but in this harsh and uncouth land the skeletons of the dead stand year after year gesticulating defiance to Death, and it generally takes another fire to eventually bring them low - unless, of course, Maurice performs an Act of God and helps them to their final rest.

A few hours of steep ascent and we emerged into open alpine country - huge white granite boulders wind-weathered into weird mushroom shapes, the sparse hardy vegetation of the high country dotted with white alpine daisies, yellow dandelions and a pinkish purple orchid. This is good ski-ing country in winter, and nestled in sheltered spots are a couple of huts, one the property of the Rover Scouts and the other the N.B.W. hut, belonging to a group of males, who, carrying on the tradition of the Melbourne Men's Walking Club, will have no So-and-so women in the place.

We camped by a pleasant little creek, and soon cheerful cooking fires glowed in the dusk, and before long everyone was lying well fed and warm beside the fires or actually in their eiderdowns asleep.

The greatest unconscious humorist of the party was one called Joe - a Czech - hero of ski-ing trips in Hungary with the temperature 40 degrees below zero. Joe seemed to do all his feeding out of paper bags. He had his cut lunch in a bag for the train, and from another bag he munched his tea sitting ruminating on a granite boulder while the rest of the party busied itself in complicated cooking, and again in the morning, while the others buzzed with noisy and frightening

activity round the fires cooking porridge, frying bacon and eggs and brewing tea, Joe sat in splendid tranquility on his high rock with his nose in another paper bag.

When the bacon and eggs and accessory edibles were eventually despatched, and all the billy cans scraped out and the greasy frying pans washed - Joe still sitting on his high perch with a far away look in his eye - the party eventually moved off without packs - destination the summit of Mt. Erica and as far along the Baw Baw Plateau as we could get by lunch time.

It was a perfect day, blue and clear - bright sunlight shining on white granite - daisies and dandelions among the green tussock grass. From a cairn on top of Erica we took in the surrounding ranges and valleys, dallying with such alluring names as Ben Cruachan, Tali Karng, Glenmaggie Reservoir. On a day when there is no haze on the horizon it is possible to see the Southern Ocean at Wilson's Promontory.

From Mt. Erica we followed a track along the top of the Baw Baw Plateau among the pink white and yellow flowers, and at a little creek in a slight depression we stopped for lunch. "I'm not much of a bushwalker," apologised Joe as he brought out his fourth paper bag. "This seems to save time somehow for other things". My sentiments incline in Joe's direction.

In the afternoon we strolled back to camp in twos and threes down our sunbathed slope, now a moving hillside of ants - myriad tiny lives among the grass stalks. You couldn't find a square foot of space which was not either an ant nest or a busy runway. To stand still meant being smothered in tiny black ants in a few seconds, so we hastily grabbed our rucksacks and gear and climbed up on nearby boulders to finish our packing.

A beautiful run down the steep mountainside with light packs, and we stopped at the only available cleared spot for that evening's camp - right under the trestle bridge by the roadside. As Monday was a holiday we didn't expect any workers at the timber mill, but bright and early a loud clanking and clattering above us announced the timber workers' trolley passing overhead. Everyone dashed out from under the bridge in case this fearsome roaring machine might be going to drop grease on us from above, and hardly had hazard No. 1 departed when a honking and clattering along the road warned us a motor car was approaching. As the only open space for lighting fires had been the road there was now a frantic dash there to rescue billies of porridge and pans of bacon and eggs. Hazard No. 2 passed by in a cloud of yellow dust and the anxious cooks resumed their cooking. There were a couple more similar distractions before the meal was safely stowed below belts.

We now set off following the rail track for a short distance, then cut off down an old mining track leading steeply down to the

Thompson River Gorge. The valley was very deep, and green with tree ferns, and quite humid now that we were cut off from the moving air of the highlands. Cool bright gleaming of the river far below was very appealing. Incidentally, it looks an excellent river for canoeing.

A couple of jungle knives had been brought for cutting a track through anticipated blackberry thickets, but fortunately the track was not unduly overgrown and slashing in the heat was reduced to a minimum.

Soon after midday we emerged from the gorge at the Thompson River bridge. Here we had a swim, hid our packs in a blackberry thicket to be picked up later by the service car, and then set out along the railway track for Walhalla, some three miles away, where there was a pub - and BEER! - and also we were supposed to be booked in for lunch.

The temperature soared high above the hundred mark and the totally unshaded railway cutting reflected the heat off its rocky walls with oven-like intensity. As the party straggled grimly on, hopping and striding and mincing along between or upon the irregularly spaced sleepers their conversation turned mainly on beer and food, and both would have to be pretty good at Walhalla to justify this Sahara-like interlude. A few ruined chimneys still standing - clearings here and there on the steep hillsides - tall pine trees and heaps of rusting machinery and rail lines and huge mullock heaps at last announced the fact that this was the ex-mining township of Walhalla. The rearguard staggered into the Star Hotel to find the first arrivals sitting deflated and glum in the lounge. "The beer's off"; in a tragic whisper. "Oh well", said a smug non-drinker (me,) "It could be worse. Let's eat". Another almost inaudible whisper "The landlord said he didn't get our message. There's nothing to eat". So we sat in the dim lounge feeling dirty, and looked at the floor and the ceiling and at the immaculate lady guests, and one overheated member furtively but obviously took off his socks in a corner, and we studied framed prints on the wall which showed Walhalla in its heyday with a population of thousands and many fine homes and clubs, hospital and band rotunda and paved sidewalks, likewise the vault of the Savings Bank with large blocks of something stacked up beside it, close inspection revealing the staggering caption that this vault housed some 70 to 80 tons of solid gold. We came out of the daze induced by that bit of information to hear the bartender announcing that after a temporary recess to clean up the hog-troughs, beer-swilling could now be resumed, and at the same time the landlord came in to tell us he had managed to get something together for us in the way of a meal. If we had come yesterday, now, it would have been turkey and duck, but as today was another day we had to be content with camp-pie and potato salad. Anyhow, the boys said the beer outweighed the dinner's shortcomings.

Some of us decided to have a look at one of the deserted mines while waiting for our bus to arrive. Emerging from the cool gloom of the dark old hotel building into the street was like walking into

a blast furnace. We climbed many steps up the steep hillside, then followed round a terrace to the old mine cutting. There wasn't much to see other than the steep entrance hole, but the high position gave us a good view of the erstwhile township. The most striking sight was the old cemetery high up on a hill so steep as to be almost vertical. They say that many of the graves were dug as tunnels into the hillside as this was the only means of ensuring a horizontal resting place for the departed.

We got back to the hotel in time to find the bus rapidly filling up, so we stood back as all good Bushwalkers do and were rewarded by being allowed to ride on the roof - in which happy position I will leave us, bulwarked behind suitcases and packs, bowling merrily along snatching at gum leaves and ducking down wildly as the overhanging branches swept the top of the bus. It was an excellent trip with excellent company. The Melbourne Bushwalkers has definitely arrived. There is a very fine nucleus of young Bushwalkers who are building the Club into something to be proud of.

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Last month Allan Wyborn expounded the principles of fishing, but forgot to mention the foibles of fishermen. One night he set a line in the Cox River and retired to bed with the line tied around his toe or some such place. In the middle of the night there was a tug on the line and Allan, in elation, made a dive for the river, but failed to remember that he was encased in his mosquito-net tent.

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Two lunatics (no! no! not bushwalkers!) were out in a boat fishing and happened to drop anchor at a spot where they pulled up fish after fish. At last, well laden, they had to pull for home but were very agitated as to how they might find the same spot next day.

"I know", said one, after great thought, "we'll put a cross on the bottom of the boat".

"But", said the other craftily, "we mightn't get the same boat tomorrow".

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