

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

A monthly Bulletin of matters of interest to the Sydney
Bush Walkers, C/- Ingersoll Hall, 256 Crown St., Sydney.

No. 166

SEPTEMBER, 1948

Price 6d.

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EDITORIAL

The Planting of Trees

In his letter to the "Herald" on August 25th., Alan Wyborn sets out clearly some of the elements of tree propagation of which many walkers seem quite ignorant. He points out that "In many areas...tree planting is unnecessary as natural regeneration is able to provide more trees, always allowing that heavy losses do not occur by storm, fire, pests, or bad management." The shibboleth which so readily comes to the tongues of many walkers - the planting of two trees for every one cut down - is not only futile, but diverts attention from the main problem. Even in those areas where is no forest growth and therefore no natural regeneration the planting of trees, though a big task, is relatively minor in the process of silviculture. Unless the ground has been prepared and protection afforded from animals, and unless the trees are cared for and protected from fire they have little chance of growing. Even if the impossible precept of planting (and growing) two trees for every one cut down were carried out, future generations would become very hungry as the steadily increasing trees encroached on agricultural land.

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Another point brought forward by Alan Wyborn is that "As regards the conservation of rare species of indigenous trees, like the cedar, it would seem that their only haven is in national parks and primitive reserves". Tree owners, like most other people, prefer money to scenery, and will sell their trees for cash. Protests against removal of timber from private land are not likely to achieve anything. The ideal to strive for is reservation in primitive reserves and subsequent protection from fire.

AT OUR AUGUST MEETING.

The President was in the Chair and there were about 50 members present.

Two new members, Bill Gillam and Bill Hancock, were welcomed.

After some discussion it was decided to hold next year's Photographic Exhibition on a Friday night at some other location to be arranged (preferably a well-lit gallery) and that the Club Room be closed on that night. The motion was opposed by Mr. Hardie who said that the Photographic Section was having things too much its own way and was already costing the Club £6 a year. Mr. Cotter, replying to these observations, said that no doubt Mr. Hardie's exhibits would be seen to best advantage in the dim light of Ingersoll Hall.

When the Narrow Necks discussion was reached it was resolved that Mr. Hardie should contact Mr. Compagnoni directly.

It was resolved that letters of thanks be sent to Paddy Pallin, who obtained wire for the fencing at Era, and to Mr. Doug. Davidson, who provided transport for tools, trees and equipment.

It was decided that Phil Hall's private subscription list for the "Save the Children" Fund be kept open till the 21st Birthday Party in the hope, it seems, that the stingy would give out on that night.

There were no nominations for the offices of Vice-President, Federation Delegate, or substitute Federation Delegate, which therefore remain vacant.

The meeting, which was one of the dullest on record, closed at 9.5 p.m.

SOCIAL NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER 1948.

Those people who saw some of Marcel Siedler's work on a recent programme, will be pleased to know that we will again have the opportunity to see more of his films on 11th September. Snow revellers will be looking forward to his film on Kosciusko, which is excellent.

We thought you'd like a free night on 24th September to prepare for that super Eight Hour Weekend trip, and we think you need a rest from social events, for October is going to be a very busy month. See you at the 21st Birthday Party?

COOLONG.

By Edna Stretton.

We waited!

Dunc stirred the simmering stew. Her cooking was always delectable but today not one of the three walkers sitting around the camp fire felt tempted. Five hours had passed since we had farewelled Reggie who, with food tied in a bundle, had set out, Dick Whittington fashion, for Yerranderie. The first hour had passed quickly. We had tried to be cheerful, talking over the events of the earlier part of the trip - the Endrick, Shoalhaven, Bungonia, Joadja, Wollondilly. Joan tried to make us see the humour in the washout caused by a cloud burst on our first day out. But the voices became gradually softer. We stared at the fire. Nobody had even bothered to ask Dunc the recipe of her latest dish, and that was the usual thing when we saw her in her favourite position, bending over the fire. Joys of the trip and good things to eat were only secondary considerations now, for at that very moment Mary was alone in the darkness, thinking goodness knows what thoughts, alone, cold and miserable, in the innermost recesses of that mountain - alone in Mt. Coolong!

We waited!

Roggie was a good walker - one of the best. Eight miles from here to Yerranderie! Eight miles back! Three miles an hour! He should be back any moment now! Would he return alone? He mustn't! Surely he could find a local man who knew something about the caves!

We listened! We stood! We prayed! One, two, yes, three forms rounded the bend on the creek. Few words were spoken. There were no introductions. Nobody seemed to care. The two strangers knew the caves well. Yes, Roggie had contacted the right men. He accompanied one, aiming to search from the foot of the mountain while Doris went with the other, to begin their search from higher ground.

We waited!

That morning we had made camp on Lannigan's Creek. We were all excited. After tents were hurriedly pitched, we scampered off to explore the caves. The old tree stump, with yards of string attached, at the entrance bore evidence of many such excursions. This should have been sufficient warning for us to take precautions. But we ignored it and saw no danger in our adventure. Besides, Mary had been in the caves before; and didn't we have matches, a candle and two torches? Surely string was not necessary!

It was indeed thrilling! The cave was large and soft underfoot and one did not have to be a student of geology to admire the delicate formation of the limestone thrown into relief by the steady flare of the candle. This was better than Jenolan! We were our own guides! We supplied our own lighting! We clasped hands and walked further into the mountain. By the time we reached King's Cross, a grand column in the centre of the cave, marking the branching of the main tunnel, we thought it time to turn back. The maze of fresh tunnels bewildered us. Dare we go into one of them? Remember, we had no string! But what was that Mary was saying? Penelope's Bower? We just had to see it! Oh, yes, we must see Penelope's Bower! 'Twas not very far - just a short distance along the passage on the right. We followed our guide, but Penelope's Bower that day was never more

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elusive. We should return! The candle had burnt to a small stump, the matches were almost spent, and our torch was useless. Hang Penelope's Bower! We must go back! We halted, extinguished the candle and held a consultation in the dark. Bats flew over our heads indignant that their home should be invaded. But Penelope's Bower won. It was ever so close now, and just to prove it, Mary squeezed through a small aperture and called to us to follow. We refused and begged her to return. But she insisted. Her sprigs could be heard scraping on the roof of the passage in which we were standing. We shouted. No answer. We sat down and waited for half an hour before turning back to find our own way out. Reggie left us huddled together while he, taking the only means of illumination, endeavoured to find the passage out. We waited for what seemed hours, then suddenly the silence was shattered by a whoop of joy and we heard Reggie scampering back towards us, yelling that he had found the opening.

That had happened seven hours ago. Reggie had been to Yerranderie and back since then and now that help had come, our anxiety was less great.

We waited!

We listened! We stood! We prayed! One, two, three, four, yes, five people came into view. Mary had been found! She was out! We hugged her, sat her down before the fire while Dunc piled her plate with food. We asked her a few questions and learnt of her experiences only through her voluntary conversation. Did she think she would be found? Yes, Mary had realised what Reggie would do. What had she done in there? Too afraid to move she had sat in the one spot and used the remainder of the candle and matches when the intense cold became unbearable. She had even tried to light a fire by rubbing, aboriginal fashion, her straw hat over her hobnails. But this was not successful. She sang, exhausting her entire repertoire and then settled down to wait, wait, wait. Then help came! She was all right now.

The two strangers had returned to Yerranderie, generously rewarded. We lay around the fire gazing up at the bright stars, concentrating on the following day's walk so as to obliterate the fears of what might have happened had Reggie not contacted those two men. Only Mary's quiet sobbing broke the stillness of the night.

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE.

Next month (October) there will be a special Anniversary issue of the Magazine. Old members are invited to contribute articles on walks or Club happenings. There is no restriction on length, nor does it matter if the walk or incident described has now faded out of Club memory - as long as it is an interesting yarn it will interest the newer members and be much appreciated by the old members. If you think there is a possibility of your article being duplicated, i.e. of someone else picking on the same topic, it may be as well to get in touch with the Editor (address, see Page 1). It would be appreciated if any such articles were sent in by the middle of September, so as to give the typiste a chance to start work, but they will be accepted up to the end of September.

Arthur Gilroy advises that he will be leading a photographic ramble - Bimlow to Wentworth Falls on 10-11-12th September. The train is the 5.21 on Friday night.

THE BANK HOLIDAY SCANDAL.

By Jim Brown.

Come to think of it, I suppose it's a racket if you're of the leisured group to whom Bank Holiday is in fact a holiday: from which it follows that if you got Bank Holiday you're a racketeer: and that may explain all the ramps, snares and delusions that accompanied my Bank Holiday trip this year.

There was, of course, a PWF behind it all (see Glossary). With the guile which characterises the species, she approached me quite some time before and with honeyed words induced me to participate in a Bank Holiday jaunt from Bell to Laura via Mt. King George, Pages' Pass and Lockley's Pylon. Now all these checking points were new ground, so I rejoiced exceedingly. Therein lies one facet of the racket. The PWF, having the support of one reasonably solid citizen, proceeds to propagandize and shamelessly employs the simple, honest fellow to coax others to join.

At all events during the ensuing weeks I approached quite a number of possible comers but they, being themselves recipients of Bank Holiday and so well versed in all the ramps, graciously withdrew, so that it ultimately fell to the PWF to rally the ranks. This was done with the gently ruthless efficiency of the breed so that by the Friday evening we appeared to number nine. Since another equally PWF had organised an opposition trip down the Nattai and lured away some of our potentials, it was quite a creditable piece of organising. All done by kindness and a PWF.

It had been arranged that I should whiz out ahead on Saturday morning and establish camp at the top of Page's Pass, also try to find the Pass, which was reported to be somewhat elusive. So I went west by No.93 - the 8.40 a.m. Lithgow train to you, alighted at Bell and bashed out the six miles along the road. On the way three vehicles passed - two small cars heavily loaded and a mad Don R. The cars offered no lift: the cyclist cut down from a cruising 70 to a sluggish 45 or so and bawled out about a pillion ride. I screamed thanks, I wasn't going far, and prayed to be forgiven my small white lie.

For the information of those who follow, I should note the following. Road not as shown - now military highway, cleaves through hills instead of around contours, often follows the original Bell's Line of Road, shown as dotted line on military map. At present, head of Pass marked by a kind of caravan affair on right hand side of road. Fair camping ground near the caravan provided wind not strong. Water point about 50 feet down gully to east caravan: top of Pass is now almost a road about 50 yards west caravan.

Reaching the point about 2.30, I reconnoitred the Pass immediately: it's so easy that I had followed it to the point where it emerges from a cleft at the foot of the cliffs in less than twenty minutes, and was back by the caravan by 3.15. This allowed oodles of time to establish camp, but I wasted much of it on the opposite side of the main road, where there's water and almost an embarrassing amount of firewood, but the ground alternates between naked, knobbly clay and patches of quagmire. On finding the tiny spring near the caravan there was no doubt about the best place to bung up the tent.

Three cooking fires had just been kindled when the racketeers arrived unexpectedly: the sound of a heavy duty engine brought me running to the road,

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but the tourist car was past. Fortunately PWF have bright, keen eyes as a rule, and my shoot of newspaper impaled at the roadside fetched them up short. We were eight, including three PWF (Misses Hardy, the original of the species, Mowbray and Bardon). I was dismayed that Dot Butler hadn't been able to make it - the weak women would be able to remain unashamedly weak. For the rest - Eric Rowen, Ira Butler, Gil Webb and guest Bob Dearden.

As a party we were incredibly good at getting established (I found later not so hot at getting moving). I led a bucket brigade to the spring before light faded, tents blossomed around the caravan, and in wonderful time tea was ready. One minor racket noted - our food list said peas - the pot produced cauliflower. But with peas at 1/9d. per lb. I feel some slight remorse at even mentioning this.

The evening was incredibly mild and still for 3,000' on an exposed spur on the last day of July. We had a comfortable sing-song about the fire, no dew or frost settled, we slept warmly.

With recollections of a 5.30 reveille and breakfast by moonlight and a westerly gale the previous Bank Holiday week-end (supervised by First Light Bransdon) it seemed almost luxury to do-tent at 7.0, and Norma Bardon emerged much later gloating "I can get up an hour after Kath and still be ready to move off at the same time". I wondered if Miss Bardon's iceberg colleague was perhaps responsible for her relative efficiency: of a winter's morning I'm immobilised for the first half hour, stare morosely into the fire and break up little twigs, beginning to vaguely resemble a normal human being after being fed. This does not measurably assist my food party.

Leaving packs we paid our respects to Mt. King George, finding beautiful camping spots just below the crest of the mountain where no one is likely to want to camp anyway, returned to the caravan and made the descent of Page's Pass to lunch on the Grose.

Page's is quite a good Pass: two landslides are fairly easily outflanked, and if the trail should be mislaid in one of its less defined spots, the ridge it follows below the cliff face is easily negotiable. Someone has made an experimental coal mining shaft a short distance below the walls, close to the first of the slides.

Lunch contained one small discernible racket. The food list said ham: instead we had corned beef and sausage. I could almost forgive this in the beauty of the afternoon walk down the Grose, with superb tawny cliffs to make one marvel that there could be any way down at all, and the sun putting a blue glitter on the gum leaf, and tinting the casuarinas a smoky olive-brown. It was remarkable, however, how Blue Gum Forest continued to turn on a "prosperity" act: according to the leader it was invariably just around the corner. Not so remarkable was the manner in which Nos.29 and 30 of the Easter-Kowmung trip (vidé April Magazine) became Nos.7 and 8 at this stage.

Night in Blue Gum with the fires painting the tall pale masts of the forest is ever dreamlike and sublime, and the PWF used it to good advantage (having adequately fed the brute in accordance with food list). Do we go out via Lockley's or do we go out the easy way by Grand Canyon? How did she guess that I am not to be driven but can be coaxed and gentled into doing anything? At all events, the more she talked Lockley's the more insistent I became in doing Grand Canyon. Like

the old woman, we swept the dust around in the hope it would get lost, until at length I plumped for Grand Canyon, and made everyone happy.

The highlight of Monday morning was Norma Barden's lovely, lovely, Holeproof hosiery, but of that the least said the better. Ask Eric if you must know more, for I must consider the Editor's space limitation.

At least, if cheated of Lockley's, I contrived to take the party up Govett's Leap Creek on the wrong side most of the way, and my exquisite revenge came at lunch time, when we halted in the clammy green vale just below the junction of Grand Canyon and Evan's Lookout tracks. Cold! We just couldn't find a tiny finger of sunlight, and the dripping jungle wrapped us in shivrous airs. The males shaved - a rasping, bloody business - and we shoved on, chasing the sun as smartly as possible. Nos. 7 and 8 were well in the rear, and the afternoon developed into a race between the benison of the sun and the progress of the tail; there were times when we waited for them but were forced on by frigid shadows before they came within hail.

So it admitted they had the propriety to join us in the last stagger into Blackheath, where we carried out one of those quite irreconcilable operations which only bushwalkers can manage with dignity. We quaffed a noggin or two in the nicely appointed lounge of the pub opposite the station - then bought fish and chips wrapped in newspaper, and ate on the railway station.

We sang the old familiar walking songs in the train, and presently subsided into slumbrous positions. Arrived in Central we paused before going our various way to voice a word of thanks for a wonderful weekend to the PWF leader. She, of course, smilingly disclaimed any credit with disarming modesty, so that we all became ridiculously profuse in our protestations, and went off feeling most inspired and elevated by our own graciousness.

For my part, I was still feeling slightly intoxicated with my nobility as I joined my electric train, until I heard the wheels chattering "Didn't do Lockley's.... Didn't do Lockley's"

Oh, well, it was just one more racket.

GLOSSARY.

PWF - Poor weak female.
(Authority - R. Braithwaite.)

SNOWY RIVER SCREENING.

The Snowy, Wollondilly - Burragorang Valley and Williams River Kodachrome colour movie films will be screened at the Shell Theatre, Shell House, Carrington Street, near Wynyard, at 8 p.m. on Friday, September 17th ONLY.

Subscription tickets of 3/- each obtainable from Gordon Ballard in the Club Rooms or from Paddy Pallin.

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And don't forget to mention this Magazine.

"LOST HIKER"

After reading again the familiar headlines, word patterns and clichés which the press uses for reporting overdue walkers, we invited Miss Marmion to let us have her own story, so that the S.B.W. at least would know what happened. Her description was as follows :

It seems that nearly every time the Press reports "missing hikers", and police and volunteer search parties prepare to sally forth in the wilds, the supposedly missing party turns up, perhaps a day or so overdue, and expresses great surprise at being the object of an organised search. So that among you readers there are very likely some who, like myself, have experienced the embarrassment of that position.

Because the Press strives for sensationalism at all costs, perhaps you would like to hear "from the horse's mouth" about the Case of the Missing Hiker.

Three of us from the Sydney University Bush Walkers decided to spend three days of the University vacation walking from Rocky Tops on the Kanangra Road, down Misery Ridge, along the Kowmung, up Church Creek, and so to Yerranderie. On the Friday night, we taxied from Blackheath to an iron hut some 14 miles along the Kanangra Road from Jenolan Caves, where we slept that night.

Early Saturday morning saw us taking to the road through the heavy mountain frost and climbing to the Tops themselves, inspecting the glorious vista of views to the north, east and south. Then we turned due south, making for the top of Misery Ridge through the scrub, using map and compass. We struck what was apparently the blazed trail (marked on the map) from the road to Misery, so, after a cheerful smoke-oh, fanned out some hundred yards apart to pick up further blazes. The scrub was thick, and it was all too easy to lose sight of each other - which is just what happened. At this point, had I only foreseen what would happen, I should either have stood still or turned back to the road. Such a course of action did not occur to me, unfortunately for the searchers that were to come, and after cooee-ing into the raging wind, and inspecting the scrub from the top of a few hillocks, I tramped on southwards, to the top of Misery, expecting all the time that the other two would do the same. There was no sign of them at the top, so down I went. What a ridge - it is aptly named, indeed. Masses of prickly scrub, and precipitous rocky cliffs necessitating a bit of contour crawling. Somewhere at this stage I must have dropped my map, which had been stuck in my belt to facilitate the constant references to it. Useless, of course, to look for it. After three hours of sliding and scrambling came the sublime feeling we all know of seeing the beautiful Kowmung just below. What, still no Ian and Harold?

Actually I struck the Kowmung just where Matheson's Creek joins it; I must have left Misery Ridge somewhere on the way down if I was ever on it. It was 3.30, and I expected the other two any time. I lit a roaring fire on the green bank, left a note under a stone telling them I would wait a mile or so downstream, and moved on, leaving a trail of arrows. That night I spent a yard from the edge of a moonlit and wonderfully peaceful river, curled around a fire. "The others", I thought "must have gone back to the hut when they missed me, but they will follow on down this morning". So another little note: "Ian and Harold. Will move slowly down the river, waiting for you to catch me. How are you getting on without the tea and sugar? You ought to try dried potato without salt. Plan to reach Church Creek by tonight, if I can recognise it without a map".

And so a whole day of slow progress along the banks of the Kowmung. It was fairly rough going, with much rock-hopping and an apparently infinite number of crossings. There is no sort of track for the first few miles east of Misery Ridge, and those nettles! What a calamity, on one of the crossings (many of which were waist-deep for me) when I lost my footing and "drowned" my watch! There went my means of estimating progress and of finding north. (No, no compass.)

There is one fascinating place, which I imagine to be Rudder's Rift, when the river concentrates itself into a turbulent stream only a few feet wide and plunges down into a great funnel of rock with a deepthroated roar. That is one of the parts rather difficult to pass.

On the lighter side, when I stopped at about midday that day I was getting cold, so decided to dry out my wet shorts by the fire. They were hangily limply on a log, when along came one of those mighty blasts of wind which so characterised the Kowmung that weekend, and my shorts were in the fire. Had anyone seen me dressed in them during the next two days (which they didn't) they would have had a good laugh at little Orphan Annie in the most tattered, hole-riddled shorts ever seen.

In between singing all the songs I know to myself, wondering about my two mates, and enthusing over wallabies and rabbits, I would study my mental picture of the map, trying to visualise how much of the Kowmung I had still to cover. The mental image let me down badly, for I camped that night at the entrance of a creek which I took to be either Lannigan's or Church Creek, but which actually was a little creek some five miles upstream from Lannigan's. Here I slept in a gale with my groundsheet pulled over me to keep off the occasional fitful showers of rain. Between showers, I was able to get my bearings from the Southern Cross. At the top I believe it snowed that night, and the newspapers were giving Sydney people visions of a woman hiker's body, lightly clad and of course without sleeping bag or anything in the way of equipment, being covered by the falling snow. Had I had any inkling of the headlines of the following day, I should certainly have slept less soundly.

Morning came, clear and cold. It was a gamble, but I thought I'd go up the creek. Another little note telling Ian and Harold my plans. It was the sixth and last of the series of notes scribbled on cigarette packets and paper bags, which together with my many arrows must have amused the search parties which followed two days later. What a dreadful creek I chose to climb! I chased half a dozen cattle up the first few hundred feet, until it became too steep for them and the dumb creatures let me pass. For a long time it meant scrambling on all fours, clutching at tufts of grass and bushes - ask the unfortunate search party who followed it up! It was obvious that I had gambled on the wrong creek. At last came the very top, and the rather frightening vista of mile upon mile of rolling hills and valleys stretching to the south and east with never a sign of civilisation. Then I recognised Mount Colong, and decided to make for it, though I did not like the look of what lay in between.

Rather depressed, I plunged down into the next gorge - Waterfall Creek - and ate some sultanas at the bottom. Strange how one loses one's appetite when forced to live on uninteresting food like bread, bacon, and sultanas for three days. At the top of the next ridge, I thought I was having hallucinations, for there was a car track, even to the tread of a tyre mark some weeks old! The track seemed to be running due east, exactly what I wanted. I reasoned that it must be the Oberon Stock-route, which I had thought to be much further south.

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Singing blithely, and thinking "Yerranderie tonight", I strode out along the track which keeps to the tops of all the ridges and supplies some truly magnificent views. I must have followed it for about six hours. It seemed unwise to leave the blazed track and hunt for Colong saddle or Colong swamp and so to reach Yerranderie by the river track. Had I only left the Kowmung via Lannigan's Creek I would have been in Yerranderie that afternoon. As it was, I was determined to reach some form of civilisation, as I thought if I did not arrive that night, people might begin to worry!

Several hours after dark, the gleam of an iron roof was a welcome sight. I charged down the hill, to the music of barking dogs, and found to my annoyance that the occupants were away for the night. Having let myself in, I rang at their telephone to no avail, the exchange being closed. So, too tired even to eat, I fell asleep on a bed on the verandah. At dawn, I tried the 'phone again, and decided to walk on. I dismissed the idea of following the telephone line into Yerranderie, as it seemed certain that the stock route would strike the main road soon.

It was 9 o'clock when the road brought me to Big Hill, a very pleasant looking cattle station. I rang the postmistress at Yerranderie, not knowing quite how to ask her whether two bushwalkers had been enquiring for me. She quite stunned me by her excited story about search parties. Needless to say I was horrified, but the reaction of the kind old farmer was "You don't say! Have a cup of tea".

The three days' lone peacefulness ended in a panic of worry and dismay. From the moment I reached the main road to Camden, I was besieged by reporters and photographers. And you know the rest - the exaggerated and distorted accounts that had nows value for a day.

The whole unfortunate episode was nobody's fault, and my only regrets are that the press caused such an unnecessary panic, and that I did not manage to 'phone Yerranderie in time to stop most of the search parties setting off from Caves House.

Notoriety, it seems, is easy to achieve.

"JACK AND JILL GO UP THE HILL
AND FETCH A PAIL OF WATER.

The trees at Era will, at least during the summer months, appreciate a drink now and then. If you are down there, arrange a watering party - and don't forget these trees right up the hill - they need the water most.

Remember, when you are enjoying yourself at Era, don't let the trees be sad for lack of water.

THE FEDERATION ANNUAL REUNION will be held at "Morella Karong" (on Myuna Creek, near Junction with Hoathcote Creek and about one mile below Kingfisher Creek) on 18th and 19th September. All walkers are welcome, whether or not they belong to a Club.

Our spy net-work (the eyes, ears and nose of the S.B.W.) has missed none of the stirring events surrounding Peg Bransdon's mishap. First, from that sinister slough known by the code name "The Pain in the Train" we have the following description of the Bransdon Bruises :

"It happened on Sunday 2nd August. Nattai River near the junction with Wanganderry Creek the place. Peg came to grief through stepping into a wombat's hole, and, as we thought, spraining her ankle. The victim managed to hobble back to Coates' farm, 6 miles from Hill Top, where motor transport was obtained to the station. The remainder of Bank Holiday was spent in rest and sunbathing (non-nude).

On the following Tuesday, mulga wires buzzed with the news that Miss Bransdon was at her office desk as usual. But ---- as the injury swelled larger, it became necessary to consult a medico, who, with the aid of various gadgets, diagnosed the swelling as a fracture at the bottom of the tibia, and promptly put the limb in plaster."

Further developments were reported by our very secret agent KBXXX, who sent the following code message :

"Once upon a time there was a happy and contented walker who also had certain ideas on the culinary art. Verily he was the king of custard makers and his fame spread through the land. From Macdonaldtown to Mulligatawny he was known as the custard king. Then it came to pass that a fair maiden was instructed in the arts by the king and many were the sighs of satisfaction as he lay back and watched his meals prepared for him in the style to which he was accustomed. But sad to relate an evil spirit took advantage of his absence

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from a walk and did strike his partner a foul blow. And there was weeping and gnashing of tooth (no tearing of hair) and the kin' did sally forth on a walk with the intention of practicing his lost art. And so I sayeth to you, when next you see the king do not mention custard for he hath fallen on evil days. A firm that doth manufacture a brew calleth CLAG hath presented him with legal document charging him with infringement of patents and illegal manufacture of their product."

Confirmation of the serious nature of the accident came from our agent "Meershaum" who reported :

"Soon the O.F. (we may reveal that this stands for "Old Fox") realised that for the first time in years there was no cook in his food party, no one to provide him with such palate-tempting delicacies as dried bananas, raisins, or dates, no one to prepare seven different kinds of vegetables or three choices in sweets. No slave to put more salt in this, or water in that, cook this a bit longer, stir the porridge or beat the milk. After a frugal meal he might have to retire to bed with only a scant covering of bracken. From this the cold night drive him at four in the morning to prepare the oatmeal of his heart's desire. The outlook in the fox's tent was, in a word, grim. But in quick time (impartial observers say 10 minutes) the horizon was cleared and the sun shone. A cook (of the fair sex) had been secured."

In reply to our urgent Telegram asking the exact meaning of the word "fair" and, if it meant female requesting full details of the tactics employed, we received the following advice :

"On your next private walk load yourself up with juicy oranges, some Oxo cubes and a block of Caramello or some such sweetmeat. The leader will probably get lost and run you along the wrong ridge and wrong ridges are always dry places. Your likoly prospect will get very thirsty so whip out the oranges and carefully hide the pool. The damsel will accept them very gratefully.

Such vegetarian food is notoriously unsustaining and when the leader has at last found the right creek nothing is more nourishing than a hot cup of beef tea. If she offers to wash up your plans are nearing fulfilment. Of course, you will have to run for the train and when she sinks into a seat it's time to blow in her ear in real earnest. Produce the chocolate and a cook is caught.

After that it is only a matter of keeping her from the foxes, tigers or the siren-like vegos, who don't cook anyway."

Peggy's leg did you say? Oh yes, we had forgotten. It is doing well and will probably be out of plaster by the time this goes to press.

To the amateur sleuth the case is now proved, but listen to this further report from KBXXX :

"Dynamite is mild. Comparing him one can only think in terms of atomic energy. One could go further and predict that mention in your columns will be only a forerunner of promotion to the pages of a Sunday journal notorious for reporting suchdoings. Someone murmurs "The green-eyed monster". All that can be said to that allegation is "tish" and maybe "tosh". Let's lay the facts before you and let you be the judge."

The menace first appeared on the very public private walk on July 4th. Result was, two fair-haired damsels; after only one walk and one appearance in the Club, have disappeared from our ken.

Think of your aching feet and cast your mind back to the Clubroom Dance on July 30th. One walker was incautious enough to bring his girl friend to the do. Result -- one girl friend dazzled by a barrage on flora, fauna, classical music and geology. Admitting that the girl's escort was allowed one dance, dash it all, its hardly cricket.

Ego inflated by his successes the menace next appeared on Margaret Bransdon's Bank Holiday weekend walk. No insinuations mind you, just the facts. Margaret has not been seen since."

A recent issue of the Campbelltown local paper with disturbing reports of night prowlers and suggestions of forming vigilantes aroused the interest of locals. Further investigation revealed that it was merely Pogram's Pilgrims stealing into the township under the blessed cloak of night. The Pilgrims' explanation was, the day was so lovely and the company so congenial, that they were loth to return to the smoky suburbs.

No, the crowd of people juggling large rocks in the bush near Heathcote were not members of a weight lifting club. Believe it or not they were members and prospective members of the S.B.W. The blame must be laid at the feet of Max Gentle and if much more interest is aroused it will be necessary to include a weight lifter's section in the Club. Any nominations for the committee gratefully received, with the exception of the Presidency, which is being reserved for Dormio.

Five walkers arrived at Hill Top Station and, to while away the couple of hours until train time, proceeded to "Do over" the local store in search of tasty edibles and scarce goods. Noting that the party consisted of 2 ladies and 3 gents (we use the terms advisedly) the matron in charge, doubtless with vivid memories of her picnicking days, inquired "Who's the gooseberry?" Poor misguided woman! Little does she know that there's no time for "gooseberries" or "gooseberrying" on most of our walks!

Fashion Note: The one bright spot in the August meeting was the arrival of Billy Taplin clad in green corded velvet slacks, a yellow "Sloppy Joe", a green scarf with a motif of osculating ladies, brown suede shoes and yellow socks. A wolf whistle from the conservationists on the front benches? No, no, it couldn't be!

When Eric Rowen arrived at Kilcare on his Bouddi trip, without steak for the evening meal, or a torch, and when the eight or so members and ten prospectives showed signs of rebellion, the situation was acute. But, being a man of action, he appointed a deputy-leader to conduct the party to the night's camp site and, after waiting an hour on the wharf, the steak and torch arrived in the pack of Norma Barden. But for a time it looked as if he would be in the same unfortunate predicament as the O.F.

SNAKES AND LADDERS

Lecture by David Stead.

"Trot me out a deadly serpent, just the deadliest you can."

("Banjo" Patterson)

The case which David Stead brought into the Club on the evening of his lecture was disappointingly small. Nevertheless it could have contained a venomous reptile of fair dimensions. Our hopeful anticipations, however, were dashed when David regretfully explained that, though he had specially caught a black snake for the occasion, it had escaped in the house a week ago and hadn't been seen since. We were very sorry to hear this news. So would David's neighbours be if they knew.

The audience was also puzzled as to where the ladders came in. David soon explained that he referred to the evolutionary ladder. Reptiles and amphibians were the lowest air breathing vertebrates in the scale of evolutionary animals. They were a very ancient form of life, having predominated on the earth during the age of reptiles, variously estimated at eighty to two hundred million years ago. Like all other vertebrate animal life they had evolved from fishes. There were still many amphibious animals, such as salamanders, frogs and toads, which maintained their contact with the water. All life required Oxygen. Fish obtained their Oxygen by taking in large quantities of water which passed over the filaments of the gills, which contained myriads of male blood vessels where the Oxygen entered the bloodstream. The swim bladder originally used for flotation developed, in the evolutionary process, a network of small blood vessels on its surface and became the simplest form of lung. The human embryo passed through all the evolutionary stages from fish to human during its growth.

Proceeding the bony fishes were the cartilagenous fishes which include sharks and rays. A spiny or horny surface on the skin, originally used for protective purposes, evolved into the jaw and teeth structure, which, in some rays appear as a continuation of the roughness of the skin surrounding the mouth.

The Australian reptile is very similar to Asiatic types though because of the long period of separation of the Australian continent there had been special developments. The red-bellied black snake and tiger snake were very similar to the Indian Cobra. When angry they spread their heads in the same way as a cobra. The death adder is similar in some respects to the viperine types of snakes of India and Africa.

There were four main types of reptiles: snakes; lizards; tortoises and turtles; and crocodiles and alligators. The snakes were a well defined type, but it was not easy to identify a number of the species. (For example the harmless carpet and diamond snakes of N.S.W. were very similar to the Carpet snake of Victoria and S.A. which was very venomous.) Everybody had interesting stories to tell of snakes, some of which were quite fantastic, such as that of the man who got out of his car and looked over into a valley, the whole floor of which was filled with writhing carpet snakes. The best snakes were undoubtedly seen through the bottom of a glass.

Lizards were all harmless, non-poisonous and non-aggressive. Only exceptions to this were a couple of American species, including the Gila Monster found in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico. There were five families of lizards. The first of these was the legless lizards, found on the coastal sandstone strip. Legless lizards could be distinguished from snakes by various external differences, the

first of which was their "benign expression". They had external ears and sensitive hearing, whereas a snake, though it could hear, did not readily react to noise. The jaws of a lizard were fixed and firmly articulated whereas those of a snake were loose - so that they could open to the point where the reptile could eat something larger than itself. Lizards chew - their tongues are soft and fleshy. They are very easy to tame and soon become friendly if fed a little. Most of the small lizards eat insects.

Next there was the gecko - and here David produced a live specimen - black and about 5 inches long, with big eyes and a large fleshy tail. It had cups on its feet so that it could climb upside down. It seldom came out of the shadows and usually lived in caves. It lives on flies, and, in some tropical parts was responsible for almost eliminating the fly pest. When pursued it could drop its tail and escape while its enemy was busy eating the tail. We were glad to learn that it could then grow another tail.

The skinks, which were the commonest family of lizards, were represented by the land mullet, the blue tongued lizard and other species. David produced specimens of the fire-tailed skink and White's skink, Egornia whitoi a very pretty little lizard, about eight inches long and beautifully marked - smooth skinned mottled black above and white below. This family produces living young. The young are almost as large as the mother when born. There are usually 4 or 6 born at once and the mother deposits them all in separate places so that, if there is danger, some at least are likely to escape. Almost within seconds of being born they are catching flies, and within 10 minutes react very quickly and energetically to danger. (This must surely be one of the clearest cases of purely instinctive action, since, if they are deposited separately, they cannot learn from the mother. Ed.)

The dragons are represented by rock lizards, frilled lizards and water dragons and the Horned Dragon of Central Australia - the water dragons are distinguished by their brilliant red bellies and habit of appearing to run across the water. They are harmless, depending on the frightening effect of their raised "frill" to keep away their enemies.

The monitors are represented here by the goanna. In Java and Sumatra a species grows to 7'6" in length. Another species lives entirely on the young of the turtle. The turtle deposits something like 60 eggs in the sand and the monitor returns regularly to catch the young as they make their way to the sea. Another species is the Bicycle lizard of Northern Queensland - about two feet long with a nine inch frill. When excited it gets right up on its hind legs and runs.

The feeding habits of the monitor lizard led to an interesting digression on the prodigious regenerative capacity of nature - e.g. the destruction of all but a few of the 300,000 eggs of the fish (either as eggs or young fish), mutton birds piled two feet high along a four mile beach, bluebottles piled on the beach all along the coast.

There were several varieties of turtles - the Sydney turtle inhabiting the mud flats round Sydney and the Murray turtles were two of the local types. The Luth or leathery turtle has sometimes been seen off the coast of N.S.W. The enormous turtle seen by Myles Dunphy of Beccroft Pen would have been a leathery turtle.

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There were two varieties of crocodile in Australia. The Queensland crocodile (*Crocodylus johnstonii*), growing to about 7 feet long and not dangerous, and the Asiatic Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), of Northern Australia and the tropics which was to be avoided.

After this David showed us slides, first an excellent evolutionary diagram from the American publication "Natural History" published by the American Museum of Natural History, which he strongly recommends that the Club Library should buy, and then photographs of a great variety of reptiles including the Tuatara lizard of New Zealand, a python which had swallowed an antelope, the cobra, diagrams of the heads of snakes, showing teeth and fangs, the "red racer" of Mexico which must dash out and back quickly before the desert heat overcomes it, and a rock lizard before and after changing colour. Interesting comments included a description of the hamadryad, or king cobra - one of the most terrible of living things, which grows to 16 or 18 feet in length and can rear to a height of seven feet. The death adder relies on its protective colouring - it will not get out of a person's way like other snakes. One type of snake, an African viper, has retractible fangs two inches long.

After this lecture members will look upon the reptiles with a more friendly and understanding eye, remembering perhaps, that we too were once reptiles. Not many people know anything of these interesting creatures and we were very lucky to have David to tell us about them.

PHOTOGRAPHIC SECTION

The programme for the next month is as follows:

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| September 23rd. | Exhibition of work done over last few months. |
| October 28th. | Afterwork on Prints - lecture. |
| November 25th. | Lecture on Stereoscopy and demonstration. |
| December. | NO MEETING. |
| <u>1949</u> January 27th. | Talk on Enlarging and how to make Enlargers. |
| February 24th. | Talk on Mounting, etc. |

Most lectures will, if possible, be by outside experts. If you want to hear a particular lecture, make enquiries, as dates may have to be shuffled. There will be a photographic ramble in early November - details on the programme.

Ray Kirkby.

The U.S. Government investigated the origin of the 87,789 forest fires which were reported in 1940. Of these 18,248 were traced directly to smokers, while there is no doubt that many of untraced fires were of the same origin.

Readers will notice that the magazine is produced this month in smaller type. If the type proves satisfactory future issues will be of 14 or 16 pages instead of 16 or 18. But the amount of reading matter will be the same.
