

## THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER.

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

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### EDITORIAL.

#### That Caves May Continue.

In the magazine for January a contributor, reporting on an exploratory trip to Mammoth Cave, Jenolan, commented with understandable asperity on the habits of other "cave-ing" parties who had left the residue from carbide lanterns strewn over the camp site. He suggested that, at least, this waste product should be dumped in one tidy heap.

At first it appeared that our writer had a case with which we could sympathise. We could visualise the camp spot being

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buried, slowly but inevitably, under an increasing stack of this excretion, until parties were compelled to camp on a random heap of rubbish - fearful thought. We have, however, indulged in a little research which, to a mind trained to appreciate the importance of regeneration, has given rise to second thoughts.

It appears that the chemical used by "cavers" in these lanterns is calcium carbide which, when subjected to immersion in water, undergoes a reaction, releasing the inflammable acetylene gas used to light the way in the caverns, and leaving as a relatively inert by-product -- LIME! Now the essential ingredient to the creation of those entrancing formations found in caves is lime.

The whole picture now takes on a different aspect. Instead of blanking out the camping spot near Mammoth Cave, the spelios are taking care of the future. Over a number of geological aeons, the discarded lime from their lanterns will be washed by rains down the valley of Jenolan River, forming into new outcrops of limestone: weathering, erosion (and other spelios) will play their part in the development of new series of caverns. The uncharitable will insist, of course, that present day "cavers" have no thought to the future, and that their deposition of the lime on the camp site is a selfish and anti-social action: but to people accustomed to pass several hours doing battle with one small crevice in the rocks it is plain that time is a trifling consideration.

We see, too, the absurdity of using candles for cave illumination a subject recently brought under our notice at a General Meeting. Apart from the hazard created when the floors of caves are coated with a slippery film of drips of paraffin wax, we are unaware of any useful results which may accrue from disposed candle stubs, which would simply become a fire risk about the camp spot.

To date our technical experts have not been able to advise us on by-products of discarded torch cells which probably abound in the lime deposits on the camping ground. It is very interesting to conjecture that, a few milliards of years away, the discovery of fossilized torch batteries in the new Lower Jenolan cave series may throw some light on the primitive forms of illumination used in the Early Atomic Age.

IT IS NOT GIVEN TO ANY OF US to know what will happen at the Annual General Meeting next month. Lest this marks our second-last Magazine we should like to say "Thank You" to the contributors, the hard-working production team and sales folk, yes, and the buyers too - all of whom have helped to make the past two years as Editor a really pleasant experience.

Very sincerely,  
Jim Brown.

FOR SALE -

One man tent. Contact  
Gladys Fall, JA7011.

F O R   T H O S E   D R Y   R I D G E S . . .

T H E R E   I S   N O   S U B S T I T U T E

..... for   C A N N E D   P I N E A P P L E   J U I C E   ! ! !

S E L E C T   F R O M   T H E S E   F O R   Y O U R   F O O D L I S T :

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T H E   ' S A N I T A R I U M   H E A L T H   F O O D   S H O P

1 3   H U N T E R   S T R E E T ,   S Y D N E Y

AT THE JANUARY GENERAL MEETING.

January meetings, with quite a few of the long holiday trippers still abroad, have a reputation for being quietish, and this year was no exception. We welcomed Tine Koetsier and Frank Burt, also "Honest Dick" Hoffman (is he bona fide?) who hadn't been available to be decorated with flannel flowers at a previous meeting.

When the minutes of the previous meeting had been confirmed, Brian Harvey observed that each tree in the proposed Memorial Grove was to be named for an ex-serviceman and the Club had lost two members during the War. The President said he understood that the actual names of men would not be used, but the name of the donating body would be displayed. Jean Harvey then moved that Federation be urged to join in the tree-planting proposal, and the motion was adopted.

Skipping briskly through reports, we came to Conservation, where Tom Moppett reported on a conference with the Sutherland Bush Fire Brigade held on December 31st. The programme previously outlined for assistance by bushwalker volunteers in fighting fires had been agreed upon, with a few minor amendments to the manner of establishing contact men. This report was adopted, and Tom then moved that the whole matter, being allied to the Federation's publicity patrols, should be offered to Federation, which could provide greater manpower resources. The meeting gave its blessing to the suggestion.

Came the momentous decision on a site for the Annual Re-Union, and a chorus declaimed "Woods Creek". Someone nominated Euroka Clearing, but this failed to secure the requisite ten primary votes, was

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eliminated from the ballot, and left only Woods Creek. It was announced that Kevin Ardill was convenor of the Reunion Committee, and moved and resolved that he be given authority to book whatever bus transport from Richmond we should require.

Only one item to be dealt with, for Sheila Binns moved that arrangements be made to book the same hall for next year's Christmas Party. This was carried without hesitation, and we closed another 25-minutes meeting at 8.30 p.m.

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BUS SERVICE - KURRAJONG TO RICHMOND.  
(Only at those hours suitable for walkers shown below.)

(Data from David Ingram.)

FRIDAY: Buses leave Richmond at: 5.50 p.m. (Kurrajong Heights)  
7.20 p.m. (Kurrajong Heights)  
9.55 p.m. (Kurrajong)

SATURDAY: " " " " 9.5 a.m. (Kurrajong Heights)  
10.55 a.m. (Kurrajong Heights)  
1.20 p.m. (Kurrajong Heights)  
3.20 p.m. (Kurrajong Heights)  
4.50 p.m. (Kurrajong Heights & Bilpin)  
6. 5 p.m. (Kurrajong)

SUNDAY: " " " " 10.40 a.m. (Kurrajong Heights).

RETURN BUSES ON SUNDAY P.M. LEAVE KURRAJONG HEIGHTS AT --  
1.10 p.m., 4.55 p.m. and 7.20 p.m. (Kurrajong 20 minutes later.)

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FREE ADVERTISEMENT.

'Bring things nearer - clearer - with the Anderson sealed beam, and say "Wuff - Wuff" at every pretty lass who passes.

...

Give a party enough rope and they'll get down Arethusa, but after some hours in slippery gloom in the gorge, having negotiated a few small cliffy spots, the party of January 23rd came to a giddy precipice: with commendable caution they decided their rope-work wasn't quite up to the standard indicated, and pulled out. Saturday night was spent at a Katoomba picture house, dozing intermittently through "Peter Pan".

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KEEP IN TOUCH. You won't be regarded as "intrepid" or even "salubrious" if you use the terms "Bono" or "Mighty" these days. Those effete terms have been superseded.

...

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### THE WETTERHORN FIASCO.

By Leon Blumer.

This is mainly a story of how not to climb mountains. Even people of more sense or experience may take heed from this article.

We were an unsafe party from the start. Don, the supposedly experienced climber (over 60 peaks, old chap!), Brian and I both comparative novices but full of enthusiasm. Don was the stumbling block, about 35, with a false idea of his own importance, wanting to dominate newcomers but with insufficient courage to carry plans through to a final conclusion.

It had already been snowing steadily for two days and nights, whilst in the Gleckstein Hut we eked out our provisions, knowing that if the weather did not clear next day we would have to descend to Grindelwald. The snow was piling up on the mountain and to climb even a day after this was considered by the hut-keeper's daughter to be sheer folly. She, at least, was certain that we should give the mountain the benefit of the doubt until a few days' sun cleared the rocks. As for us, we went to bed that night with mixed emotions.

At 1.0 a.m. it had stopped snowing and become colder, but still rather doubtful. At 3.0 a.m. there were a few stars showing, so 4.30 a.m. found us stumbling up the rocky path in semi-darkness and a

slight morning mist. I had been given the honour of leading by friend Don, who placed himself second and Brian third. We reached a small glacier and the rope was produced, more like Alpine line and of doubtful strength. We grimly went about the business of tying on. Roping up is like getting married "in sickness and in health, till death do us part", etc.

We crossed the small glacier, then up a steep snow slope with an avalanche groove down the centre. Over the small berg-schrund we then attacked the first rock face overhanging that side of the glacier. This was the end of a steep buttress descending from the west face and all these rocks were plastered with new snow and ice. Judging from the appearance of the cliff above, we were going to have some fun that day. No one voiced opinions, but Don knew the way and we would be fairly safe. Hadn't he climbed it the previous year?

We reached a part on the buttress where the normal route crosses a couloir, climbs some difficult rocks below a V-shaped gendarme and reaches the bottom of a great gully, the key to this west face. Here Don assured us that we could continue further up the buttress to the wall above, and traverse right to the ridge bordering the great gully. This didn't sound right, the face above looked very steep and was still in cold shadow. As I steadily kicked steps upward my fears increased, but Don seemed to be in earnest and as yet there were no suggestions of returning because of bad conditions.

It was cold work, the sun's light shining silver through the transparent ice on the top of the wall. As the face steepened, every hold now had to be cleared of snow and we were conscious that time was pressing. Occasional small rocks and icicles were beginning to tinkle down past us. We paused, very alert, ready for instant action in case of a slip by someone. We must traverse 200-feet across the loose ice-bound slabs and then attempt to gain the ridge.

I led 30-feet across a small deep avalanche groove, losing my hat during this difficult move. It righted itself and quickly rolled on its brim down the slabs. Just an old felt hat gathering speed -- I wonder?

The climbing now became spectacular, balance very important. I worked my way slowly to a small secure rock in that slope and asked Don to belay. He suggested an icy-looking gully on the left. I favoured climbing the almost vertical slabs to the crest - both very difficult - a 50-ft. pitch either way. I felt we must gain the ridge and, although in a fever of excitement, was confident it would go. A moment's hesitation, then Don was climbing quickly down the slope, nearly pulling me off my insecure stance. The idea was absurd, we couldn't climb it, and we should try further around to the right. Amazed, I said nothing, while down below Brian was stating in a rather curt impersonal voice that he was willing to back me in the attempt. We both sensed the feeling of uncertainty in the party, both at a loss how to deal with it, separated as we were by two short lengths of rope.

We moved off reluctantly, down a few hundred feet, and carefully worked out way across to finish again below the crest. There was still a horrible drop here, but it didn't seem to matter. We were like people caught in a drama, half-audience, half-actors. I heartily wished I had never set foot on the mountain.

Here I managed to gain a few feet above Don's head, trying hard to prevent rocks pulling out and numbed fingers from losing their grip. One foothold disintegrated and rattled down into the abyss, then there was Don's voice again saying the rocks were loose (so obvious) and that we were climbing dangerously. I managed to come down slowly to the small platform and then there developed one of those fierce arguments likely to occur in any ill-assorted party in a dangerous situation. We were snarling at each other now, the rope joining us just a sham. Let Brian climb it, says Don, he has Vibram rubber soles. Brian consented and was brought up from below. Then another argument developed, Don not wanting to give an indirect body belay to help Brian, the rope being held directly to the rock. The rope would certainly have snapped in a fall, and Brian would have gone 2,000-ft. to his death - not a very pleasant thought. In sheer desperation, Brian left my small platform and inched his way up that 50-ft. pinch, clearing the snow from icy minute holds. It was severe work, glorious to watch but rather frightening. I watched dumbly, hoping fervently that no slip would occur. After a few minutes we could see only the soles of his boots, to the left, then just the rope moving snakily up the rock. It stopped, came a short hullo, then Don went up, calling anxiously for a very tight rope. My turn, and I marvelled at the nerve and courage which must have been required to lead such a desperate pitch. We sorted ourselves out at the top, a very narrow knife edge of a ridge. About 20-ft. of this required placing both arms over the top and scraping along with out boots. Never had I seen such a narrow crest. To our left was the abyss we had come up, to our right the great snowy couloir.

I resumed the lead reluctantly, gradually thawing out in the warming rays of the sun. Clearing snow-covered holds was still hard work.

On reaching a small col at the foot of a steep snow slope we took a much needed rest. Valuable time had been lost on the face and we were lucky to be above it. The Monch, Jungfrau and Eiger were now standing above a sea of mist and it was warm - too warm. Very fine weather in the Alps usually requires a cold breeze. I wondered whether we would remain alive to see the day's end. We were a rather tight-lipped bunch now.

I led up the 600-ft. snow ridge, over some ice-glazed rocks and across a steep couloir to below a formidable-looking cornice about 5-ft. high. Here the others belayed securely while I flogged and cut with the axe. Huge chunks slithered down the slope. I could have enjoyed myself on this fine pitch, but the small voice inside me was too insistent. Up through the gap and the summit snow plunged gently downward into sheer space 7,000 feet towards Grendelwald. I sat down rather shakily on the axe head, looped the rope around it and brought up the others. We hardly dared to stand, such was the feeling of floating space. Here the usual photographs were taken and after a while we climbed down through the hole in the cornice and descended slowly and carefully, Don insisting we face inwards. Evidently the steepness was too much for even his tried nerves.

We had lunch on the previous resting place, each person quietly concerned with his own thoughts. The warm, heavy mist had now risen to the lunch spot, and I dreaded going down the couloir. It was 2.30 p.m., the worst time of the day.

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It was difficult to keep balance on the snowy slabs and it was imperative we mustn't slip. We were a few hundred feet down when it happened ---- a stealthy slithering noise and I looked up to see a small avalanche descending swiftly on us. I barely had time to yell warning and get the axe into some hard snow before a weight like a loose sack of flour hit square on the shoulders and pushed me down the slope. I was left hanging by the axe strap, and had only a momentary vision of Don being pushed off his steps. The axe held, Don slid only a few feet before getting his axe in, and Brian had tried to dig in, but encountered only hard rock. It was a close go and, after a few moments of real panic, we reassembled ourselves in rather shaky order and continued down the couloir. Don then slowed proceedings by insisting he climb down face inwards in the narrow chute, presumably to look out for more slides. After a while he started to go to pieces, as in the heavy mist we were not quite certain of the way off. Things did look horrible in the eerie light, snow-spattered crags and slabs disappearing into the mist, and furthermore, Don doubted if we were in the right couloir. Brian and I kept grimly silent. We didn't want to die young, and the party's morale was being badly shaken. Self-control was becoming more difficult.

We climbed across a very steep snow bank and peered desperately into the gloom. At that critical moment, the mist cleared sufficiently for us to see our morning's footsteps looking very tiny, 400-ft away, across the west face, which was now completely altered after warm mist had been at work. The mist closed down again, and it was decided to traverse the face to the subsidiary buttress, then follow down the footsteps. It was touch and go, but the hour was late and it would work provided no one slipped.

I led across, conscious that we were near the end of our patience and skill. It was precarious balance climbing in the slippery loose slabs, sometimes just the boot nails and the shaft pick supplying the necessary stance. I tried to put the incident of the rolling rocks out of my mind, but couldn't. The boots slid off once, but the axe point was in safely. One slip and we would all go down the slabs.

Then we were there - at last - moving as quickly as possible down the buttress. We were still in danger of stones above, but the worst part was over. The rest was normal climbing until we reached the snow slope below the buttress. Here Brian accidentally started an avalanche, but was held by the rope.

A sharp trot across the glacier and down the rough path brought us to the hut about 6.0 p.m. - it was a welcome sight. The warden had arrived and was pleased to see us, the warden's daughter very surprised. Evidently both had expected to find our bodies on the glacier the following morning. A guide inside the hut made no comment when Don proudly told of the new route we had made on the face, then packed his gear and disappeared quickly through the doorway, bound for Grindelwald. Don had got his peak - that was enough for him.

We made a cryptic entry in the log-book "climbed Wetterhorn - dangerous snow conditions - a novel ascent with certain novel happenings". The guide looked in the book and gave a quiet smile as we said goodbye. We trudged wearily down the path in the gathering darkness.



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'PHONE B'HEATH 81 OR 146.   LOOK FOR CARS 3210 or TV270

OR BOOK AT MARK SALON RADIO SHOP -   OPP. STATION.

The Sub-committee on Bush Fires had concluded its deliberations at the home of Alex Colley. Supper was served, and, as the members rose and stretched prior to wending their ways.... the blow fell .... Alex: "Well, fellows, before you go, could you help me carry that refrigerator out of here, along the passage and up the stairs, along the path, through the gate, on to the road and into the Land Rover, etc. .... etc. ...." The Sub-committee: "Hmm, ah. Yes, only too pleased. etc. ... etc...." After the job was done, the final paragraph of the notice of meeting was read again: "Alex Colley has suggested, very generously, that we meet at his flat to discuss the matter".

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YOUTH (AGAIN) TRAPPED IN CAVE. ... Admiral Anderson's been and gone and done it again. This time (January 16th) he spent three hours writhing in squeeze holes in the Mammoth Cave - and no Bev Price to fire him to greater exertions. On the Saturday night he couldn't sleep - no, not claustrophobia - just trying to find a new bruise to lie on.

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SUCH IS FAME! ... Are we so famous, or is it just super-efficiency on the part of the P.M.G. Department? A letter from New Zealand, addressed "Colin Putt, S.B.W." was correctly delivered to Colin's home address.

### EXPERIMENTS IN ERADICATION OF MISTLETOE.

(Taken from "Main Roads" - dated March 1953 - Information extracted by David Ingram.)

Tests for the eradication of mistletoe on roadside trees by the application of hormone sprays have recently been carried out by the Forestry Commission of N.S.W. and the Department of Main Roads, in co-operation.

Surveys previously made by the Forestry Commission revealed that along roadways, in parklands, water catchment areas and private property which have been partly cleared, mistletoe infestation was moderate to intense, and seemed to be increasing from year to year. The distribution of mistletoe is highest in the northern tablelands, and follows the coastal and tableland strip, diminishing in the southern part of the State. Mistletoe attacks not only Eucalypts, Casuarinas and scrub woods but also such trees as the Cypress and Kurrajong.

Mistletoe, a member of the Loranthaceae family, is a semi-parasite, deriving water and mineral salts from its host tree, while synthesising its own carbo-hydrates in the same way as ordinary green leaf plants.

Birds, flying foxes and possibly possums and koala bears are usually the disseminators of the mistletoe seed, which is covered with a mucilaginous substance which enables it to adhere to the bark of trees. The seed establishes itself in an axial area at the junction of two or more branches and penetrates the bark by means of a root-like structure. This root taps the host tree for water and minerals in solution, so that the branch beyond the mistletoe is deprived of food and eventually dies. The mistletoe thus appears fixed finally at the end of the branch.

Mistletoe shows definite seasonal response. In the Sydney area flowering takes place in November-December, and fruit setting in January-February.

The normal life of mistletoe on Eucalypts is computed at approximately ten years under favourable conditions. One host tree may support twenty or more separate mistletoes all in a state of healthy development. The most notable effect on the host tree is loss of vitality, disfigurement, and stunting, laying the tree open to fungus infection. Mistletoe can kill a tree in the course of years.

There are two possible reasons for the prolixity of mistletoe on roadside trees; First, such trees are most accessible to birds bearing the seeds, and secondly, mistletoe is dependent on a good supply of sunlight in order to carry out its process of photosynthesis.

#### Control Measures.

The Forestry Commission had carried out earlier investigations, which indicated that promising results could be achieved by the use of hormone sprays, but it was realised that further tests were necessary in order to assess the permanent effectiveness of sprays.

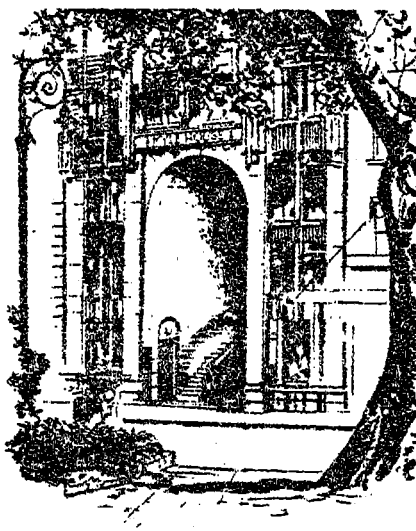
# PHOTOGRAPHY ! ? ! ? !

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In 1949 the Forestry Commission approached the Department of Main Roads with a view to collaboration on further tests on mistletoe eradication by the use of hormone sprays.

On main road No.154 from Kingswood to Bowman's Creek in the Municipality of Penrith, eucalypts on the roadside showed considerable infestation of mistletoe, and these trees were selected for the purpose of the tests.

The tests were carried out on 8th November 1949 under the direction of the Division of Wood Technology of the Forestry Commission. The Division of Wood Technology supplied the chemicals and directed the mixing and spraying. The Department of Main Roads provided transport and labour, and carried out the spraying, except for knapsack spraying which was carried out by the Division of Wood Technology.

Spraying equipment, apart from the knapsack spray, was lent by the Hawkesbury Agricultural College. This consisted of a power-operated spray with a 150-gallon tank with an agitator for the purpose of keeping the spraying solution moving and preventing the settlement of chemicals.

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A small numbered galvanised tag was nailed to each tree treated. In all, 126 trees were treated, extending over a length of four miles.

About one-quarter of a gallon of spray was sufficient to treat one tree. Four different treatments were used on four separate sections of the road :-

1. (Trees No.1 - 72) 0.3 per cent. solution of 2:4D sodium salt plus a wetting agent in proportion of 1 pint to 50 gallons.
2. (Trees No.73 - 108) a proprietary product diluted, etc., in accordance with the instructions of the manufacturer.
3. (Trees No.109-112) 0.2 per cent. solution of 2:4D Ethyl Ester 20 per cent. plus 2:4:5T Butyl Ester 20 per cent.
4. (Trees No.113-126) 0.2 per cent. solution of 2:4:5T Ester Concentrate.

Inspection of the area three weeks later showed a marked withering of the mistletoe. In some cases the foliage was drying and falling from the plants. There was no withering of the host trees.

No difference in results was observable from the four different treatments used; each was equally effective. At this inspection it was noticed also that some colouring agent in the solution was necessary to ensure consistent spraying.

A further inspection in July 1951, revealed variations in the "kill" of the mistletoe. As far as could be judged, the bulk of the mistletoe had died, and it was suggested that the variations in results might have resulted from variations in the consistence of spraying. Apart from the loss of the tree branch beyond the mistletoe growth, no damage to the tree was discernable from the treatment.

These tests have contributed valuable information on the control of this pest. The Division of Wood Technology of the Forestry Commission is continuing research in the application of hormones at ground level by means of pastes.

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Glowing with virtue, Brian Anderson left the bookshop, clutching his First Aid Book. After all, if he was going to Tasmania with just one companion it was only reasonable that one should swot up on the vital knowledge. You never knew. Your mate might not have a clue if an accident happened. Now, Ted Weavers .... struth! He was a permanent ambulance officer.

....

Continuing the Anderson saga (does no one else do anything worth reporting in this show?) - it is understood that he committed the ultimate breach by leaving a member of his party alone at a critical moment of the Arethusa Gorge trip. In detail, it was outside the pub at Emu Plains. "Honest Dick" Hoffman, who resides in the Parramatta district and recorded his name and address correctly in the Visitors Book, was warned off - he wasn't bona fide - and had to wait outside whilst Meadows quaffed the beer ordered on his behalf.

BUSHWALKING IN A PILGRIM LAND.

By Marie B. Byles.

"Green grow the rushes, O!"

How many bushwalkers who sing this song realise that the first bushwalkers, or people who walked only for pleasure, were the pilgrims to the Holy Land of Palestine, and that this was one of the chants they sung? For six weeks I have been wandering through another pilgrim land, the land of the Ganges River basin, only partly on my own feet, I am afraid, but I have seen many hardy Tibetans who make use of conveyances as little as possible, and who as soon as they alight from the train, stride off with their curious frame rucksacks on their backs.

My first stopping place was Rajgir, which is a pilgrim centre for those of many different religions. Hindus, Moslems, Jains and Buddhists have shrines and temples there, many of them 2500 years old, and generally situated near the tops of hills - if bushwalkers bag trig stations, pilgrims bag temples, and it is amazing how women in saris down to their ankles trip up those hills for this purpose! Most of the Ganges basin consists of perfectly flat land cut up into small fields bounded by low mud walls serving as footpaths and with villages every mile or so, and each village with its mango grove. But occasionally there are hills, like the Warrumbungles geologically, and here one gets a prickly bushland, which would appeal to the really "tiger" bushwalker, but which for most, as for the pilgrims, would be better penetrated by the tracks which lead to all the shrines.

Those really tough Tibetans, I mentioned, sleep out in the open wrapped in their big cloaks, and cook their own meals like bushwalkers. But the wealthier Tibetans, as well as the pilgrims from other countries, prefer to make use of a dharmasala, a guest house for religious purposes (something like the mediaeval monastery) and this is what I have done, though, unlike others, I have often taken my sleeping bag and slept under a mango tree. Most pilgrims bring their own servants to cook for them, but those travelling alone, like myself, find it easier to arrange with the dharmasala servant to do the cooking and also the buying of the food in the village. Every guest brings his own bedding and spreads it on the string bed or wooden bed that is provided. Very superior I have felt with my lightweight "Paddy-Pallin" instead of the cumbersome bedrolls which others carry.

My last place of pilgrimage was Lumbini where the Buddha was born, and to reach it, I partly rode and partly walked twelve miles along the foot of the mighty Himalayan peaks. I was most fortunate, for it rained and cleared the air of dust, so that when I woke at Lumbini the next morning, I saw those stupendous mountains rising, I imagine, about 24,000 feet above me. I have seen Mount Cook from the sea towering over 12,000 feet above. But never before have I seen mountains so remote and so ethereal as this, my first glimpse of the Himalayas.

And do these pilgrims have their "Green grow the rushes, O!"? Yes, but, as they chant in Tibetan, Pali or Sanscrit, I do not know what they sing. I only know that their chants are often very haunting and sometimes strangely beautiful.

THE FARTHER COUNTRY.

(Based on a trip carried out in Feb./March, 1953).

By Jim Brown.

A best-seller written by Nevil Shute several years ago and titled "The Far Country" had for its locale the country around Mansfield in Victoria. Mansfield itself was disguised as "Banbury", but Merrijig, 12 miles east, and the Howqua River were given their correct names. Although the author did not have much to say about the adjacent highlands, they provide some of the finest walking country in the Australian Alps, so, for this "information" article on the high country near Mounts Buller, Cobbler and Howitt, we have adapted Nevil Shute's title.

The ranges east of Mansfield form the watersheds for a number of rivers: the Delatite and Howqua flowing into the Goulburn: the King, Rose, Catherine and Dandongadale, which go to join the Ovens: south of the Main Dividing Range the Wonnangatta, Macalister and Jamieson, all flowing south to Gippsland and the sea. The tops themselves have their summit at Mt. Buller (5,911-ft.), but Sterling (5,800'), Cobbler (5,342'), Speculation (5,600'), Howitt (5,715') and Magdala (5,600') are all within a few miles. The horizon contains Buffalo Plateau to the north and Bogong-Hotham-Feathertop in the north east.

From all these main tops, and quite a number of the lesser summits superb views are to be had. As a purely selfish reaction, I liked the scenery as well as that of the Lake St. Clair-Cradle Mountain Reserve in Tasmania, but perhaps I was prejudiced by reason of the agreeable camping conditions. I certainly preferred this country to all of the Kosciusko Alpine area, with the exception of the views of the west face from Townsend and Twynam, which the Victorian scene rather resembles in grandeur. A tilted rock strata, which appears to be a variety of sandstone and conglomerate, layered with belts of reddish shale, runs through most of the range, and this gives the effect of real peaks instead of the plateau-meadow formation of our N.S.W. alpine country.

As a result, the walking is much more "hilly" than one expects in our relatively flat alpine terrain. Between the main tops are saddles dropping down to 4,600-ft., and it is possible in a comparatively short day's march of 8 or 10 miles to climb over 2,000-ft. in stages of from 200-ft. to 800-ft. and to descend an equal amount, camping at the same height as one started. For this reason it is usually advisable to limit each day's stage to about 10 miles, unless the party is a strong one.

A certain amount of time must be allowed for pathfinding if unfamiliar with the ground as, in some places, it could mean a bad delay if the track were lost. Because of height variations, the vegetation is subject to much wider change than that encountered on Kosciusko plateau. Up to 4,000-ft. there is normal forest cover, with much wattle and similar rubbish: from 4,000 ft. to about 4,500 ft. a more open forest with woolly butt and snow grasses, and light low cover of one of the red-and-yellow flowering pea shrubs: from 4,500 ft. up to 5,000 (sometimes 5,200 ft.) snow gum and grass and a little small

shrubby: while the top levels, above about 5,200-ft. are generally tree-less or with scattered stunted snow gum.

Water supply is a greater problem than in our local alps, where every little hollow has its stream, every gentle vale a strong creek. Probably because the snow fall is lighter, and certainly because of the steep slope of the ground, run-off is rapid, and it may sometimes be necessary to descend quite a distance to find water. By the end of a dry summer, only main streams and certain permanent springs are flowing, and the latter may be trampled by the cattle which graze on the highlands during summer.

Camp sites are often dictated by water supply, and it would be unwise to press on from a sure spring late in the afternoon. Otherwise camping conditions are generally excellent, with soft couches of snow-grass and abundance of dry snow gum for firewood. The region above the tree-line is so limited in extent that one need never fear being caught out on a completely exposed place.

Like the Kosciusko country, it is summer time walking country. Without local weather reports, it would be chancy to walk there before November or after the end of March. The weather on the high points then resembles May in the Blue Mountains.

Our trip, deliberately planned to be easy, was :

- Day 1: Car from Mansfield to Mt. Buller. Camp near Ivor Whittaker Memorial Lodge. Afternoon went to summit, generally viewing lay-out of country (about 2 miles).
- Day 2: Along jeep track to Mt. Sterling (descent 1,200-ft., ascent 1,300-ft.), over Memorial Hill, camp near Hearne's Hut (8 miles.)
- Day 3: Descent to King River (descent 2,000-ft.) Mislaid track and had bad trip in thick scrub. On River for lunch. Camped 1 mile downstream near King River Hut (6 miles for day).
- Day 4: Ascended to Cobbler Plateau (about 1,800-ft.) At Cobbler Hut for lunch. Picked up stores left for us (5 miles for day).
- Day 5: In the morning without packs to Mt. Cobbler and back to Hut. (8 miles - ascent and descent about 1,800-ft.)
- Day 6: South across Cobbler Plateau to Mts. Koonika and Speculation. (about 8 miles - ascent of over 2,000-ft.)
- Day 7: Over Speculation and Cross Cut Saw to Mt. Howitt and Macalister Springs (ascents totalling 2,700-ft. - about 6 miles - a short but rugged day with heavy packs - no water en route).
- Day 8: Rest day at Macalister Springs. Walked a little way toward Howitt Hut - appears to be a fairly flat ridge far to south.
- Day 9: Over Mt. Howitt, Big Hill, Magdala, No.1 Divide to camp near Mt. Lovick (The Cairn) (about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles - ascents of 2,500 ft.)
- Day 10: Over The Cairn, descent 2,300-ft., on to Sixteen Mile Creek, Howqua River and Ritchie's Hut (about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles).
- Day 11: Down the Howqua about 6 miles (only 2-2 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours walking).
- Day 12: Down the Howqua to Fry's Homestead (about 5 miles - many fords about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours walking).
- Day 13: Out to Merrijig (8 miles). Car to Mansfield.

With the exception of the stage from Mt. Speculation for about 3-4 miles across the Cross Cut Saw, we were on cattle pads all the way, sometimes blossoming into main stock routes. It was good walking, and

easy on feet and footwear. A little care in pathfinding needed in places where cattle have congregated near water or in saddles. On the south end of Cross Cut Saw and again near Mt. Magdala the cattle tracks form useful sidlings which avoid topping every minor summit. Cross Cut Saw, by the way, is a kind of extended and peaky Narrow Neck, dropping into steep valleys on each flank.

Flies were pestilential on the Howqua, and quite numerous enough on the highlands also. Perhaps the warm, dry weather we met caused them to be more active than usual.

MAPS: The map we used was one produced by the Victorian Mountain Tramping Club, which has made a study of this particular area. It was entirely adequate, a most admirable job of mapping and kept well up to date. Copies of this, and adjoining maps, may be obtained from Stuart Brookes, of the V.M.T.C., 34 Orange Grove, Camberwell, E.6, Victoria, and cost approximately 3/- to 3/6d. each. A reference copy of the maps, donated by the V.M.T.C., is held in the Club's map library. The sheets concerned are :-

1. Watersheds of King, Howqua, Jamieson and Macalister Rivers (the sheet used on our trip). Scale 1 inch to 100 chains (approx.).
2. Macalister River Watershed - Scale 1 inch to 2 miles. Covers most of the area we were on, but in less detail, and a large region to the south and east.
3. Snowy Plains (track from Howitt Hut to Lake Tarli Karng and Mt. Wellington - south from the region we traversed). Scale 1 inch to 1 mile.
4. Ben Cruachan and Environs - showing trails south from Mt. Wellington. Scale 1 inch to 1 mile.

STORES: Mansfield is a town of reasonable size (notwithstanding the comment by a citizen of Sheffield, Tasmania (!) inscribed on the wall of the Gents Public Lavatory "Mansfield is a hicks town"). There is also a store at the timber settlement of Mirimbah at the foot of Mt. Buller.

Mr. Bennie, who has a property on the Rose River below Mt. Cobbler, will arrange to take stores up to Cobbler Hut by pack horses. He should be written in advance, and the goods consigned to him C/- Whitfield Railway Station. He packed two parcels, weight about 50 lbs. up to Cobbler Hut for us at a cost of £4. Rail freight from Sydney was 32/-.

Mr. Fred Fry, of Howqua Homestead, will also undertake similar jobs. I daresay parcels would have to be mailed to him C/- Merrijig, via Mansfield. He would be able to pack stores to parts of the Howqua River, or to Howitt Hut, 7 miles south-east of the mountain of that name and 6 miles from Macalister Springs.

TRANSPORT: If entering the region from Cobbler side, the approach would be from Wangaratta through Whitfield. For a party of any size it would probably be best to hire a car at Wangaratta.

To come in to Buller or the Howqua River, Benalla is the detraining point. A 'bus leaves Benalla for Mansfield at 7.45 p.m. daily, excluding Sunday, returning from Mansfield at 8.30 in the



morning. Distance 40 miles, fare 9/- single, 15/- return (don't know currency of return tickets). Several hire care proprietors at Mansfield or Mirimbah will do the Mt. Buller trip, and would probably go most of the way to Howqua in good weather. Our man charged £4.10.0 for the Mansfield-Mt. Buller trip.

Owing to delays involved in 'bus travel, a party with little time to spare may be advised to hire a car right through from Benalla (67 miles to Buller, 52 to Merrijig). There is a 'bus service from Mansfield to Mirimbah (beyond Merrijig and at the foot of Buller), and at certain times this plies as far as the top of Buller, but the service is infrequent, and enquiry should be made before relying on this.

### FEDERATION NOTES - JANUARY.

By Allen A. Strom.

1954 BUSHWALKER BALL: Organiser wanted. Any volunteers? Phone WB2528.

FRAZER PARK: Wyong Shire Council will investigate the quarrying of gravel on the Park.

MORTON PRIMITIVE AREA: The Fauna Protection Panel approved of the dedication of Morton as a Faunal Reserve in 1950. The Federation has asked that the Panel proceed with the routine necessary to have the dedication completed.

BUNGONIA GORGE: The Mines Department has agreed that mining pursuits at Bungonia have interfered with the panorama from The Lockdown. They say that certain conditions embodied in the Mining Leases will prevent the destruction of the Gorge. The Federation is not satisfied with the conditions and will attempt to obtain improvements.

BARREN GROUNDS AND BUDDEROO: The local M.L.A. has agreed to assist in having the area dedicated as a National Park. The finding of two rare species of birds ... the Bristle Bird and the Ground Parrot ... on the Barren Grounds, has prompted the Federation to ask the Fauna Protection Panel to have that area dedicated as a Faunal Reserve.

BOUDDI NATURAL PARK: About one third of the Park was destroyed by fire on Monday, December 21st. A brochure has been prepared and printed giving the location of the Park and outlining the aims of the trustees. Copies readily available from A. Strom (WB2528). Volunteers for work parties and patrols within the Park are still urgently required.

KARIONG PARK PROPOSAL: The District Surveyor says that he should be able to make a recommendation about the area shortly. The Lands Department has been awaiting a report before taking any action. The next visit to the area will be on the weekend, February 19, 20, 21. You are invited to come and bring your friends. Contact A.W. Dingeldei at UA2983.

KEDUMBA VALLEY: Reported that the Kedumba Valley Pastoral Company (responsible for the new track down from the Queen Victoria Homes to Kedumba Valley) will have 4,000 acres of freehold near Maxwell's "Kedumba House". Federation will enquire into the boundaries of this property.



# PADDY MADE



Here is a copy of letter recently  
received by Paddy.

Some short time ago you repaired a Paddy-  
made rucsac for me which, purchased about  
five years ago, was beginning to show  
signs of slight strain on two seams.

Your store refused payment for this  
service on the grounds that the seams  
should not have started, and I feel  
prompted to thank you for this excellent  
spirit, which is nowadays so rarely found.

My rucsack has in recent years done  
unfailing duty in many parts of the world  
under all manner of conditions, from the  
Cuillins of Skye to Kosciusko, from the  
Austrian Dolomites to the mountains of  
Ceylon.

Incidentally, my constant companions  
included a whole range of your equipment,  
two man hike tent, etc.

With good wishes to you and your  
organisation in 1954.

..

STOP PRESS: Triple hob-nails now in  
stock.

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