

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER.

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to the Sydney
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AT OUR MAY MEETING.

The meeting commenced at 8.30 p.m. with the President in the Chair and about 40 members present.

Correspondence included a notification from the Chief Guardian of Fauna of a conservation conference to be held on July 2nd. Two delegates from each organisation were invited, also suggestions for subject matter. It was decided that Allen Strom and the Conservation Secretary (if able to attend) would represent the S.B.W.

Jim Hooper, discussing the Federation report, said that the report printed in the current issue of the magazine gave a wrong impression. The Police had not expressed any opinion on the efficacy of the practice or the part played by Army Signals, for it is not their business to express opinions. Nor did they "thank the Bush-walkers for their patience and forbearance" but the Senior Police Officer had asked Jim to pass on thanks for our cooperation.

Brian Harvey made reference to the unfortunate delay in issuing the Walks Programme. Though he fully appreciated the difficulties it was a matter of some concern to a leader if the programme came out only three days before a walk for which 7 days notice was required of starters.

A motion to limit Club entertainments to "about an hour" was then discussed. Neil Schaefer referred to a previous motion which requested the social secretary to organise the slides in advance. Jack Wren thought that we would only be "cutting our own throats" if we limited showings to an hour because some very enjoyable slide nights, particularly by visitors, had gone far beyond that time. Malcolm McGregor said that in his experience as a lecturer he found that an hour was about enough as even a very interested audience seemed to become somewhat restless after that. The discomfort of eyestrain in looking at bright fixed images for a long period was also mentioned. The motion was amended to refer not to entertainments generally, or to slide nights generally, but to members' slide nights; and was carried in this form.

The meeting concluded with some magazine business. Jack Gentle, the Business Manager, referred to the rising costs of producing the magazine. He said that though he hoped to maintain or increase advertising matter, the best means of increasing revenue was to sell more magazines, and he therefore asked members to do their best to see that everyone in the Club bought one.

Allan Hardie asked whether any typiste had been found for the magazine. The Editor replied that the magazine was typed alternately by Jean Harvey and herself, but there was a prospective typiste in view.

- Alex Colley.

CONGRATULATIONS to Shirley King and Paul Hanke who were married in March. We hope to see some of those colour slides of Mt. Buffalo, Shirley.

THE EIGHTY-FIVE MILERS.

- 'Jet' Wagg.

Well to begin with there were twenty - a good round figure. Two on early trains, ten on the Fish, four on the 6.37, one with private transport (two others hitched in same) and one who lives there. That makes twenty.

Of course we didn't all line up in a great herd and start off like the Grand National; that was never intended. The little food groups chattered around, then one by one, as they sorted themselves out, they bustled off into the star spangled night. And what a night! I think it must have been the air - not quite warm and not quite cool, but that subtle mixture of both at once, which you only notice on special nights; so we had to keep taking great, deep breaths of it because it smelled so good; and the moon beamed benignly on everything we did.

Devil's Hole was a bit of a bottleneck so everyone caught up there except the three private transports who had passed us on the road out (we knew that the Admiral was one of these because as they drove past the scornful cry of "Peasants!" rang out in those unmistakable tones), also Jim and Kev who had slipped away at Katoomba to apply some linament (internally), and, of course, the four on the late train. The track down below was quite slushy and for the next two or three miles we had to be careful of big puddles looking like patches of moonlight and, of course, big patches of moonlight looking like puddles. These always came together so that you found yourself jumping over the puddle that was really quite dry and landing in a patch of moonlight that wet you up to the ankle. So the moonlit miles sped by and from the rate we talked you'd think the party was running on hot air. Of course as we climbed the road grew dryer - up the hill of boiler plates - clank, clank - and then at last a rest just above Black Jerry's. By this time we had caught up with the three private transports and discovered them to be Neil (the owner), the Admiral and Ken Angel. We found them guiltily resting about half way up the boiler plate hill. After a few minutes all the party had come up except Jim and Kevin, so considering them to be old hands at this sort of country we moved off. The facts were of course that Jim hadn't been there for ten years and that Black Jerry's was the one ridge that Kevin had never been on; so when they arrived after moonset, things not being too clear, they camped the night on top.

After we moved off into the shadowed side of the ridge we stumbled and grumbled on the steep stony track until about half way down we came out into moonlight again and we stood looking down and across the Cox Valley with the now pale moon throwing long shadows all around us, while the very faintest breath of cool, grass scented breeze came stealing up out of the river and touched our faces. Where the ridge steepened at the foot it was every man for himself as we groped or cascaded into the inky shadow according to our physical inclinations.

It was half past eleven at the bottom so Neil and the Admiral bedded down and so did Heather, Gawd and Donnie, while Grace, Dot,

Ken, Snow and myself continued. The moon was no help to us now as we floundered along the river bank and there was a dearth of torches as some batteries had already expired. We crossed Galong Creek and almost stopped but Dot and Ken were still ahead so we decided to plug along as far as Tin Pot. Most of the enthusiasm had gone out of us now and we groped along knowing full well that we'd be doing it faster and easier in the morning. At last as it seemed that Tin Pot was never going to come we decided to camp. Of course although we'd passed some delightful sites sheltered by trees and softened by dry, fragrant grass, the area in which we finally stopped was paspalum and nettles all drenched with dew and liberally sprinkled with rocks. Just before we settled Bev, John, Bob, and Eric came through and camped about a hundred yards further on and as my eyes gladly closed they caught a flicker of firelight as Snow, down by the river, brewed himself a final cup of cocoa.

Next morning we intended to be away by five o'clock but ambitions like those are born to failure, besides no one woke until twenty to six. Dot was first away with her lightning, lightweight, sleeping-bag-pack, then Grace, Ken and I pulled out at about six leaving Snow forlornly waiting for Heather to come along with his breakfast. John and his crew were astir when we passed them just down the river and we noticed with some envy that they were already having breakfast. We made our first and coldest crossing at Harry's River then slogged along to Breakfast Creek, and being able to resist no longer we had our breakfast there on the spot. This didn't take long and in twenty minutes we were off again, some crossing, some taking the rough. I think we generally found that where the rough is really rough there isn't much in it, but further down the crossings were slower.

We caught up with Dot as she breakfasted just opposite Merrigal Creek then as we set off together Bob appeared in the distance well ahead of his group and shouted the information that Neil and the Admiral were coming along behind. The two theorists were walking to a strict schedule - one hour on, three minutes off - stopping as punctually as a bundy machine. Typical was when they churned by as we rested at Kanangra River by that delightful stream with the inviting green banks. "Well we'd like to stop" explained the Admiral with a note of envy, "but we've got another fourteen and a half minutes to go".

At about half past ten we began to drift out of this beautiful spot and wend our way once more along those banks while the sun beamed and the river played and the grass gave up its gentle fragrance. The sky was blue and the whole world we saw seemed bright - not just sun bright but brilliant with the accumulated happiness of past days like these.

Some way along towards the Kowmung we met Arne who had just ploughed across the river and floundered ashore almost at our feet. We were quite pleased to see him because we hadn't been at all sure that we would, and also he brought us news of the four yet unaccounted ones, Putt, Stitt, Garth and himself. This crew coming off the later train failed to make the turn to Black Jerry's and shot straight down to Carlon's. Starting at seven the next morning they raced down Breakfast Creek and reached the Cox just in time to see Jim and Kev. slinking past.

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Tummies were beginning to send more and more urgent messages through the sympathetic system when, "Yes, yes, no, no -- it can't be!" But it was; the Kowmung River. We dropped our packs and lit the fire and watched the troupes come trickling in. Dot, Grace, Arne and I were in the first group. Then Heather, Don, Gawd, Snow and Bob followed by the two Time Machines in company with Ken and finally steaming down the bank with all the appearance of power and inexhaustible energy of a goods train came Peter, Col and Garth. Soon everything was still except for the muffled sound of steady crunching as lightweight Rye-vitas yielded to persistent molars. But one set of jaws was not working. Alas poor Bob. He had walked so well that he got ahead of the three slower members of his party, then John ("Pills") White damaged his knee, quite unknown to Bob, who got even further ahead. But Mr. Abernethy's misfortune hinges on the fact the party of four were only carrying two rucksacks and Bob didn't have the one with lunch in it. Hard cheddar! Last seen he was wandering disconsolately back along the Cox in search of Food.

From about two thirty, with every indication of reluctance, parties began moving out. Putto and team who had been last to arrive showed great conscientiousness by being first off with Dot, Grace and me following. The rear where we two struggled to keep up was the ideal place to compare Dot's nimble lightness with Colin's massive power, Garth's square determination and the lithe strength of Peter and Arne. I have the clearest mental picture of Stitt making a crossing as we saw it from ten feet higher up the bank. There he was, chest deep with his pack floating high up behind him, surging across with the current, which must have been pretty strong, having no apparent effect. After an hour Grace and I stopped for a rest and that was the last we saw of them that day.

When we started again we felt that the miles were beginning to take their toll, for Grace had a kink in one of her thigh muscles and I was getting rather tired too. Black Dog Canyon was kind to us, but after crossing, the knee-high grass on the flat before Cedar Creek was heavy going and the seeds made our socks prickly like introverted pin cushions.

After a couple of rough, deep crossings we entered the dim, dreary corridor of Kill's Defile. Although Grace and I found this part depressing the party coming behind had their transit enlivened by a mid-stream meeting with a large group of University walkers. Apparently the water wasn't deep enough though for after they had been chatting for a few moments athwart the current a shocked maidenly voice was heard to exclaim "Oh look, that boy's only got underpants on!" And for shame it was true. The Admiral, a theorist to the last, was walking only in underpants to reduce friction.

All parties, except the six behind and the fast five, foregathered at Harry's Humpy; the halt and the lame. Here follows a brief list: Ken: slipping cartilage in knee, Neil: unidentified foot pain caused by boots, Admiral: tired, Grace: unidentified pain in thigh, Heather: tired but keen, Gawd: large blister on ball of foot, sprung leg muscle, Don: sprained ankle, Snow and I: just tired.

In the dusk we found the beginning of the road that goes through to Bimlow and set our weary feet upon it. Tea we had at the first place where it touches the river and where three of our number had thoughtfully cached food two weeks before. This was a quiet meal with everyone weary and most thinking about sweet slumber. But not Heather and Snow, they were determined to go on. The Admiral was perturbed and grew serious. The crossing at McMahon's, he said, was deep and boisterous, the rocks were slippery and the banks were steep. Why he himself only the previous weekend, etc. If they would take his advice etc. etc. Still in the face of all this the intrepid two determined to go on and attempt a cautious crossing, so they made off followed by all except Don and Gawd. We, of course, were only going along the road to find a suitable spot for oblivion. A casuarina offered and we accepted; five tired bods who thankfully immersed themselves in the soft warmth of super down. But that's not quite right. Ken and the Admiral (still theorising) didn't have sleeping bags, and so it was that as often as we woke we heard the far off clatter of castinnettes, or so it sounded.

But the day was not done for all of us for while the moon beamed down and the dew gathered on the grasses, two figures battled with the hazards of McMahon's crossing and two more trudged solidly on, passing the youthful sluggards.

Somehow twenty to six didn't seem so late on Sunday as it had on Saturday morning, but there was much to do. Some food parties were splitting up, there was breakfast to eat and so on, but for the Admiral there was even more. There was a Decision. The night before he had been sure he would go on but now with stiff muscles and in the chilly morning air he sat debating with himself. "If I don't finish" he said "they'll say I'm a piker and if I do they'll say I'm made so I can't win. And I always pull out of things anyway so it would be a

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shame to spoil the record now". Then the decision made he turned his psychology on Neil who was half out of his bag in the process of getting up. "Look Neil, there's no need for you to carry that heavy sleeping bag all the way to Picton. Just give it to me and I'll carry it to Bimlow and let you have it on Wednesday night. No, I assure you it's no trouble, and don't bother to pack it up, I'll fix it for you. Now you'd better be getting a move on." So Neil was coaxed out and no sooner was he out than the Admiral was in "This is the first time I've been warm all night!" he chortled.

Twentyfive minutes it took us to eat and sort and pack and then we were off (that is Neil and I were off) for of the seven bodies that lay down the previous evening only our two heaps of "bones could rise again" -- at five forty anyway. The morning was already bright with the promise of another glorious day and the sharp air tempered the spring in our step. About half a mile along the track we sighted Jim and Kev. also pushing on, and came up with them just at the perilous McMahon's crossing. We could see Snow and Heather on the opposite bank so we knew at least that they had not been swept away. We entered the water cautiously, making sure of each fresh step, expecting at any moment to be immersed up to our waists, but no- it looked safe. It was safe. Two steps from the opposite side Neil said "Be careful. There's a twelve foot channel there with a quick-sand bottom!" but it was just another rumor and we stepped ashore not wet above the knees. So much for the Admiral.

We learned from Snow later that they would have gone further the previous night only during the elaborate precautions - changing to swimming costume, wrapping clothes in plastic etc. - to cross the knee deep stream, Heather's watch became mislaid so they had to camp near by and look for it in the morning. Of course it was about two feet from where it was lost.

There were four of us together now with Kev. just behind, and Jim, whose ankle had seized up, tagging lamely, gamely in the rear. In the sandy stretches of the road we looked for tracks or traces of the fast five who, we felt sure, must be far ahead. And we found some too. Someone with an ordinary hobbled boot and someone with a broad boot, no hobs, and wearing a gaiter (you could see the strap). Also further along we found bare foot prints. "That must be Dot; her shoes were nearly worn out yesterday". Neil and I pulled ahead a bit now, forcing the pace, (we paid dearly later) and when we came to the junction we found "Arne" scrawled on the road and an arrow pointing into the bracken. There was no sight of the gent however so he must be further on. A mile more, we turned a corner and there they were, both of him; the one with the hobs and the one with the gaiters.

Arne told us his sad story. He had cut the corner over the Policeman Range while the others went around, then continued down the river. The tragedy occurred as he was crossing with his boots, dry, safely clasped in his hand. In the middle his foot slipped, his hand slipped and away went one boot. He said he searched but couldn't find a trace which isn't amazing considering the current and the darkness. Then that tenacious man, without a thought of giving up, sat down and improvised a boot out of three socks, stuffed with grass, reinforced with bark and bound up with a strap off his pack (the gaiter strap). "And the others are in front" we said. "No, you are the first. The others, they are all behind. I do not think they pass me in the night."

It seemed incredible but it was true. The fast five - the nimble, the determined, the steam engines - they were all behind. And how did it happen? We made many guesses but never hit the right one. We found later that they waited for us below Harry's, but as we took the road they didn't see us. When we didn't come they camped and next morning, guess what - they slept in. Isn't that priceless.

The three of us started off then, rolling up the miles as quickly as we could. Nine o'clock brought us to Bimlow and the first real rest since we started. There was a general patching up of feet and in a few minutes Heather and Snow came along; Heather still impatient to be moving; then Kevin arrived looking as though he was out for a morning's stroll.

Soon they were all on the way again except Neil, whose feet would take him no further, and except me still busy patching blisters. When I did start I found I was horribly stiff but I said goodbye to Neil and hobbled after the others. Just down the road I came upon Kev talking to Gladys and Len Fall, the first of the kind people with cars who came in to take out survivors. Kev and I walked together for a while until it was time for Kevin's hourly rest (union rules) and I went on alone till I met David Ingram. David was our real fairygod-mother, producing all sorts of comforts for the troops - everything from fruit drops to detailed directions, not to mention the encouraging words. We had a short chat about the weather and such then went our ways. The weather, incidently, was perfect, which was good but bad because it tended to hatch out plagues of tourist types in all sorts of sporting vehicles, so one had to be pretty agile to stay whole. A few bends later and who should I meet but Arne brandishing

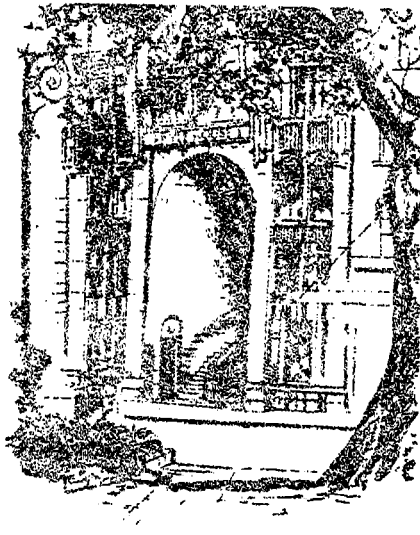
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something and obviously highly delighted. It turned out to be a cardboard box (much better than bark to walk on). I was very, very footsore by the time I drew near to Spring Corner, where David had said that he would pick me up if I decided to drop out. The nearer I got to the corner the more undecided I became but of course there was no real decision. The corner came and my legs kept swinging and my feet kept plodding, then next thing I was going downhill to the Nattai and I knew I wouldn't be back.

At the Nattai Bridge I caught a glimpse of Snow and Heather down the bank. How indefatigable those two seemed as they lightly and steadily ate up the miles. When they stopped in a shady spot I came up with them and gladly spread myself out while we took stock of the situation. It seemed there would be only four of us left to finish so we decided to wait for Arne then all go on together. Soon he was along with his dot and carry one stride, and we all made off along the river track. This was like a holiday after the dusty road and the Sunday drivers, so we made the most of it. Sheehy's Creek seemed to come along in no time, and after making sure it was the right spot we settled down to lunch. You really can't settle down to anything worthwhile in forty minutes but we did our best and I scored a tin of baked beans and sausage (N.B. one sausage) off Snow and felt quite pleased with myself. While we were eating we saw two bods crossing

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the river about a hundred yards up and thinking they must be some of our crew tried a few tentative names like "Colin!" and "Garth!" but the two mysterious ones with scarcely a wave and certainly not a shout, continued on their way. Perhaps they belong to some other club we thought, but what any sane walker would be doing out here at this time in the afternoon we couldn't imagine.

Sheehy's Pass was much easier than we estimated so we really burned along and soon reached the waterfall near the top. And there, who do you think we saw? Jim and Kevin. There was much surprise and joy on our part and much unconcern from them as they quietly let us know that to a couple of experienced walkers like themselves such feats are everyday business. Eventually we wheedled out the story of how Kevin had met David as he drove towards Bimlow and had been persuaded to take the easy way out. His pack was stowed snugly away and it was blissful to relax on the comfortable seat as the hard won miles sped so effortlessly by. But what was that speck in the distance? Horrors! No it couldn't be! Yes, it was Jim, head down and going like a train. So out came Kevin's pack - out came Kevin. Saddle up - quick march! And he'd already walked this bit once.

After the waterfall the grade lessened and we coasted easily along and were just starting to expect the main road when we saw a car parked. It was David again, all smiles, more kind words and - bless him - another handout. "Only eight more miles," he encouraged, "and most of them are down hill".

I remember we set off at ten past four, thoroughly elated. Eight miles sounded ever so short and there were even a few snatches of song. As we went along however, we found that downhill was even harder on the feet than uphill and as Heather and Arne went faster and faster Snow and I went slower and slower and our spirits sank lower and lower. We'd have sold out cheap. We stopped only once along the way and Oooo! the agony of getting started again. Then there was the joyous moment when the lights of Picton appeared and the tedious hour as we dawdled with the road towards them. Eventually we arrived; we could see David and Arne, it was just mother three steps, two, one, then blessed relief as we sat down on the pavement, plopp! Rigor mortis set in very quickly so that we could scarcely stagger and we had to look both ways very carefully and give ourselves plenty of time when crossing roads. We finished up with an exciting dash for the train, Heather almost streaming out behind as she was hauled aboard, and I think that's the whole story. I suppose we missed a few intriguing sights such as Putt and Stitt sitting down to a picnic lunch complete with tablecloth but all things considered it was worth it. Yet one can't deny the truth of the statement made by Ian, our loudest critic, that the best thing about the Eighty Five Miler was the conversation it provoked.

WANTED. Good home for 1950 Fordson 10/5 Panel Van. Ideal for camping. Served the Maddens well and faithfully for 30,000 miles from Kosciusko to Cairns. Loves reunions and bushwalking company. £275 or near offer. Anyone interested, please contact Stan Madden, 29 Norma Avenue, Eastwood.

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FEDERATION NOTES - MAY.

- Allen A. Strom.

The S & R Section of the Brisbane Bushwalkers reported on a search at Mount Superbus for a lost aircraft. A very fine liaison has been built up with the R.A.A.F.

RESIGNATION OF VICE-PRESIDENT, JOHN COTTER: John Cotter asked to be relieved of his position as Vice President and his resignation was received with regret.

HEATHCOTE PRIMITIVE AREA: A further letter from the Trustees of the Primitive Area outlining the reasons for their objection to the use of the Area for Re-unions.

THE OBERON STOCK ROUTE: has been recently graded from the turnoff on the Yerranderie Road to Colong Station and is at present impassable to motor traffic.

KARLIONG-WARRAH AREA: It has been authoritatively stated that the District Surveyor is in general agreement with the proposal for a National Park in the Area; a report from this officer should set the necessary machinery into action. In the meantime members of Club

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might care to join another inspection party which will visit the area on the weekend, June 17th, 18th, 19th. Ring UA2983.

KURING-GAI CHASE TRUST: Notices appearing in the Sydney press indicate that the Kuring-gai Chase will again be attacked.... this time for the establishment of an aerodrome. The Federation will ask the Trust to resist any action of this kind and members of Club are asked to write as citizens, to the Minister for Lands or their local Members of Parliament protesting against the policy of Park "Filching" and this latest move to remove part of Kuring-gai Chase for an aerodrome.

CORANG: Some little research has shown that 26,000 acres have been reserved from sale about the head of the Corang River. This is following a recommendation that a National Park be established in the area.

The Chief Guardian of Fauna is arranging for a Conference of conservation bodies on July 2nd. Two representatives of the Federation will attend and a number of suggestions will be made for the agenda.

370 acres have been recommended by the Fauna Protection Panel for a Faunal Reserve. The area is in the St. George's Basin District, near Killarney.

The Panel's Field Officer will investigate the land between Tamboy and Seal Rocks as a region suitable for a Faunal Reserve.

SEARCH AND RESCUE PRACTICE, APRIL 16th/17th. I understand that my report appearing in the May issue of "The Sydney Bushwalker" was incorrect in that I had stated that the Police had expressed an opinion. The Field Organiser of the Section informs me that the Police made no statement. I would like to take this opportunity to apologise to all concerned.

A section of the Motorised Unit of the Club (the Moppetts, Roots and Browns, with the Harveys, Jess Martin and Sheila Binns as passengers) took to the hills for Anzac Weekend and made a standing camp at Whalan's Hut (near Rocky Top) about 6 miles from Kanangra. Two very pleasant half days were spent rambling around Kanangra Plateau in perfect autumn weather, with every land mark from Big Misty, Medlow, right around to The Gib, Bowral, and beyond, gleaming in the bright sunlight. The hollow rocks to the right of the Kanangra Road terminus proved interesting and highly delighted the four kiddies in tow. Sunday was spent in a walk down Morong Creek to the falls where it tumbles 1,200' into the Upper Kowmung. Morong Creek is a very fascinating waterway rushing over a wild profusion of rocky drops and is said to harbour trout.

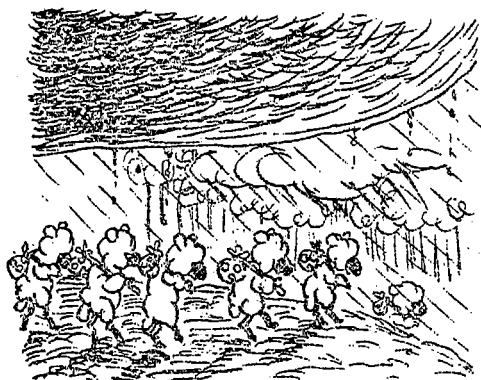


INTO THE CUMULUS - EASTER 1955.

- Alex Colley &
Brian Harvey.

It looked well on the programme - just the thing for walkers after the summer respite. Forty-three miles in four days, with no time wasted in travel - should give us plenty of time to enjoy some of the best scenery in the mountains, to camp early, and to relax when we felt like it. Little did we suspect that the light sprinkle of rain which started while we waited at Central fell from a cloud which was to blanket the mountains, and us, for four days. But right from the start things which should have gone smoothly didn't. We read the Departure Indicator Board - "All Stations to Lithgow - 6.33 p.m. from No.3 Platform". Hurrying breathlessly to get a seat, we found the party forming up, but no visible means of transport. About 7.15 a country-laden train did come in, and in we piled. 50 minutes late we took off; but it was go-slow tactics. Out near St. Mary's two "through" trains passed us as we hibernated in a siding. We felt very much forgotten - or did the Railway Commissioner know the train was half-full of walkers (not half-full walkers) and was it "class distinction" raising its ugly head again)?

Averaging 16 m.p.h. at last we arrived at Blackheath at 11.40 p.m. to be greeted by mist, rain and cold. At the behest of our leader, Alan Wilson, we gathered under an awning whilst he plunged into a vast horde of walkers seeking out our driver for Kanangra. Late passengers were regaled with snatches from our opera, brought to our minds by the weather conditions :



'We are poor little lambs, who have
lost our way

Baa, baa, baa

We are little black sheep who have
gone astray,

Baa, baa, baa,"

a refrain soon to become the theme-
song of our trip, little though we
knew it at the time.

Having made arrangements to leave for Kanangra at 5 a.m., we retired to the spartan comfort of the nearest bus shelter to bed down for a short nap. The electric light, being connected with the street lighting, couldn't be turned off. A peaceful night, broken only by incessant mile-long goods trains some 20 feet away, came to an end at 5 a.m. when the driver poked his head in. At the most critical moment, just as we were hastily stowing our sleeping bags, the cursed light went out.

Mist and light rain greeted us at the Walls. Then occurred one of the most exasperating experiences that could happen to any walker. In the confusion at the bus-shelter, Jack Perry's rucksack had been placed in the boot of a car, the driver of which had subsequently swapped cars for a larger vehicle. There was nothing for it but that Jack return to Blackheath - he didn't even have a look at the scenery - there wasn't any. "We'll see you at Cedar Creek Junction on Sunday night Jack" we said, consigning him to a solo weekend.

After breakfasting at the overhanging cave under the road-loop, we traversed to scrubby tops and down Gordon Smith's Pass. Except for a brief glimpse down Murdering Gully we saw nothing of the Spires nor Kanangra Deep. For a short while we got below the cloud ceiling in Gabe's Gap, then ascended up into the woolliness again. A rockpool just past Mt. Berry supplied tea-water for lunch. It was like Pitt Street on Gangerang; a line of bodies would break out of the encircling swirl to disappear again, capes adripping. Nobody knew quite where they were along the ridge - nobody, that is, except Jess Martin. Jess always knew exactly where we were without the map. It was past 4 p.m. when, after puffing and panting up the ever-rising saw-tooth, we arrived at the top of a round hill which, for all we could see, might have been 100 feet above sea level, but was found to be the Cloudmaker Trig Station, 3,819' above the Bondi breakers.

By this time we had decided to camp on Mt. Tiwilla instead of the cheerless Dex Creek, in the famous "100-man Cave" discovered by Max Gentle in the manner we will relate later. As mentioned, the top of Cloudmaker is a dome with no ridge formation apparent, particularly in the misty gloom. Alan, who had not been there before, did a skilful piece of navigation to lead us diagonally across the head of Tiwilla Creek. Darker it became, with no sign of the tell-tale clue of the commencement of the cliffs forming the Eastern rim of Tiwilla Canyon, in whose line was the cave. Visibility was 75 yards. The

creek was rapidly gullying, when a minor rebellion in the rear persuaded the leader of the wisdom of camping "here and now" on what level ground remained. Nobody could be sure where the cave was, except Jess, who told us where we were, where the cave was and how to get there, but as so often happens in this wicked world, the small still voice of knowledge was drowned in the clamour of opinion. We started pitching our tents in one of the most depressing places it has been the sorry lot of walkers to find on a wet night. A recent fire had destroyed all vegetation, and sprouting suckers were all that had grown since. Lumps of shale covered the ground. When removed, yellow squelchy clay remained. But one had faith - may his shadow never grow less, may his moustache become more bushy; Don Mattnews went on alone, and lo and behold, just about 200 yards down the ravine he found the cave. Tents were pulled down and tucked in bundles under arms as we hastened there, snatching up sticks for firewood as we went. It is truly a magnificent cave, high, dry, with a floor of sand nearly flat, and about 200 feet long. There was even dry wood left by the previous occupants (they must have read the Code of Ethics). Had the world's best hotel opened its doors, it could not have been more appreciated. It was rather a weird scene as the smoke reflected the red-glow of the spaced-out cooking fires, giving a curious optical illusion of great distance, with figures moving in and out of the orbits of red light.

After our night of luxury, we ascended to the plateau above the cave - the Tiwilla Plateau, a fairly open tableland about two miles long and a quarter to half-a-mile wide, running out like a tongue from the Gangerang Range, with cliffs on both sides and the end. Somewhere on the end was Compagnoni's Pass, down which was our route to the Kowmung, via Tiwilla Buttress, to which the Pass gave access. "On the Kowmung for lunch" was the cry "only four miles or so". And a drop of a couple of thousand feet! We trooped along like Brown's cows, seeing nothing but the ever-encompassing mist and the scenery under our feet. After about 45 minutes we came to a headland - obviously on the wrong side. Retracing our steps part of the way, we came out on cliffs running more or less North and South. We bore off to the right, sidling the slopes, peering over the edge at intervals, having the cotton-wool pulled over our eyes all the time. Sorties were made ahead, with negative results, so we marched back to a small creek where we had lunch. More investigations - sub-committees went out, still no clues. Then the mist lifted momentarily. Ah, there was the buttress. Onwards. The way was steep and slippery and the mist worse. Rain started in earnest. To brighten and console the party the haunting melody of the opera fell on our ears :

"We're the party of the lost ones:
 We are far from human ken:
 We have wandered from the known haunts of man.
 And we feel it very keenly
 That our folks won't see again
 Each well-remembered face they used to scan".

We perked up considerably after that. Suddenly we were startled to hear boyish voices out in the mist - beyond the cliffs - were they angels in answer to our song? No, just the Lindfield Boy Scouts climbing up Compagnoni's Pass.

It was at this point, back in 1930, whilst endeavouring to find a way down, Max Gentle had had the misfortune to have his pack roll over the cliff, much to his chagrin, no doubt, as he was "far from human ken" and the Pass wasn't then ferretted out. Undaunted, he had made his way back along the plateau, dropped down round the end of the cliffs, and in so doing discovered the "100-Man Cave". Traversing the tops of the scree slopes where they joined the cliff line, he worked his way round until he was under the cliff where his pack had rolled over, and so recovered same. During this sidling process he afterwards recorded his now famous words "That he was perilously short of food". And as we know Max is a good eater, we quite believe his statement. We believe Max to have been the first walker on Tiwilla Buttrass.

The Scouts gave us a hand with the rope, assisting us down the mud and rock apology for a Pass, and we hope they found the cave to which we directed them before dark. The Pass wouldn't be bad in dry weather, but it was "crook" in the rain. (We mentioned this to Ron Compagnoni when we met him down in Blue Gum the other day, and he replied: "You're not meant to go DOWN the Pass". We're still trying to work that out as we go to press.)

The ridge flattened out a little way down and we camped, having found water nearby and tons of firewood. It had been a good day. We had covered two and a half miles as the crow flies since half-past eight, and here was darkness coming on. "On the Kowmung for lunch" indeed! But that was for another day. Having commenced the walk with half a day "up the sleeve", we were now half a day behind schedule. The best laid plans of mice and men!

We could scarcely believe our eyes next morning as a red dawn appeared, followed by the sun. But we were off the tops and there were no views. It was now a race against time. Once again perversity dogged our footsteps. Due to the multiplicity of leaders at this juncture we got on to a spur of Tiwilla Buttrass, as so often happens when going down heavily wooded ridges with no visibility. Although we recognised our mistake, rectification by sidling would have been an uncomfortable and time-consuming business, and we dropped down into a very rough gully full of vines, stinging nettles, moss covered rocks and at least one wasp's nest, as one member can testify. But fortunately it didn't last long after we joined up with the rushing Tiwilla Creek, which led us down to the friendly Kowmung running broad and clear over its bed of many-coloured stones. At 1 p.m. we had our much-promised "lunch on the Kowmung" (wrong day). Fourteen miles to Cedar Creek Junction. We would "bash it out" we said as we set off at a good clip. Deep crossings retarded our speed, and 4.15 saw us all at Cox Junction where we met up with a party of the Bushcraft Association. They had, they informed us, perfected a method of camping without tents, finding that groundsheets, properly rigged, could do the job. They were, moreover, well equipped for any contingencies that might arise. In a bound volume their leader carried the ten works of Dick Graves. Though he had carried them down from the mountain top he didn't find them there. They were printed in Sydney. Ah me, that we poor blunderers had had such inspiration! Could we but have turned to Page 10 in our Book of Instructions - "Caves" and thereunder found them tabulated by size



and location - "100-man caves", "90-man caves", "80-man caves" and so on, and better still - see footnote "(1) How to find in the dark". Or under "Buttresses" - ways off, where and how - finding in mists. And under "Ridges" - what to do when half-way down the wrong spur. But except for our 2-inches-to-the-mile map and several prismatic compasses we had nothing to guide us - not even a copy of the Constitution.

The Cox was running strongly. The heavy rains of recent months seem to have removed much of the sand that covered the bed, and once again the river runs over stones and rocks. It may be that the run of good seasons has covered the eroding granite country further up with vegetation, or is it the lack of rabbits?

Darkness found us about four miles from Cedar Creek and on the "wrong" side of the river for camping. Wrapping our rucksacks in groundsheets we walked into the chin-deep and fairly swift smooth water just above the rapids at Black Dog Creek, slipping about on the indiscernible bottom of large river rocks, to an excellent camp on the left bank. About 10 p.m. descending mist and rain blotted out the moon as we wriggled into our sleeping bags.

As we had abandoned the idea of going up Cedar Creek owing to the time-space factor, we decided to get up at 5 a.m. on the morrow and walk in to Katoomba via the Black Dog Track and Clear Hill. Mist and rain enveloped us as we plodded up the Track next morning. Debert's Mountain, usually dried by sun and wind, harboured a multitude of leeches which closed in from all sides with malicious intent. We believe they heard of our change of plans and spent the night creeping up from Cedar Creek. Whilst we ate our lunch at Glen Raphael, they ate us, if only for the sake of sharing the nourishment. On the way along Narrow Neck the mist lifted sufficiently for a glimpse into Megalong and Jamieson Valleys. What the new members told their families is hard to imagine, but would anyone believe they had walked right through the Southern Blue Mountains without seeing them?

We were overtaken by Jack Perry just as we approached Dog Face Rock. He had gone out to the "Dogs" over Clear Hill, and become somewhat "uncertain" as to his location, but somehow finished up down on the Cox. As there was no sign of our 24-hours overdue party at the Kowmung Junction he had made for high ground on Sunday night and arrived at Debert's Mountain by some devious process which he is never likely to repeat.

Ironically, back in Sydney on Monday night it was clear and starry!

(As a matter of interest to those who venture along the Gangerang, Max Gentle tells us that Gordon Smith's Pass was first traversed by Gordon and himself on the first Sunday in October, 1929,

(before some of our young bloods were born) and whilst we have reason to believe they were the first bushwalkers to cover the ridge from Kanangra to Cloudmaker, it is possible the Pass had been descended by tourists who frequented the Walls area before that date, although we cannot imagine they would have gone much further.)

BLUE GUM WORKING BEE-CORROBOREE-INSTRUCTIONAL.

- Dot Butler.

Is there something peculiar about Bushwalkers, the way they turn up in vast droves whenever a working-bee is mentioned? They just love work. Or was the promised opera the lure? Be what it may, the fact remains that between 40 and 50 people converged on Blue Gum on May 14th/15th, all eager for work.

A number by train and taxi, others by motor bike, reached Perry's Lookdown at about the same time and set off down the track by torchlight, and some time this side of midnight we were down in the forest having a goodnight "cuppa" before turning in.

Morning saw us early astir as the ground had been somewhat damp and cold to camp on, and life was more comfortable by the fire cooking breakfast. As the Works Manager and Foreman hadn't yet arrived and we didn't expect them before lunch, most of us formed ourselves into a photographic and rock-climbing expedition and set out with cameras and rope on shoulder to assail Lockley's Pylon. We found a beautiful sun-warmed rock face and chimney, and it wasn't long before roped bods were spreadeagled up and down the architecture. We were coming back up the cliff face, and a particularly steep pinch it was too. Geof was having a turn at belaying the party up. Grace had been left till last as she had the brightest pants on and Geof wanted to do justice to the colour snap. Half a dozen of us are perched wherever we can find a foothold on a narrow ledge waiting for the last one to come up so we can use the rope for the next pitch. Ah, here comes Grace, gingerly inching her way up the dubious toe and finger holds. As her head appears over the crumbling edge of the precipice the following conversation takes place:

Geof: "Can you hold it there Grace? I want to take a photo of you."

"All right", agrees Grace, somewhat reluctantly. So Geof drops the belay rope and proceeds to fiddle with his camera and light meter.

"Tut, tut, Geoffo! Most unprofessional!" quoth I.

"What's wrong?" says Geof, "I've got her properly exposed."

"I'll say you have!!"

"Oh," says Geof, "I thought you meant my camera technique."

.....

We reached the top without any untoward incident, then dashed off with all speed back to camp for lunch. The workers were already at work down in the creek building a weir of logs to deflect the stream away from the bank it was undermining, and forcing it to take a middle channel. A flying hail of stones thrown by dozens of workers built up a wall on the up-current side and so consolidated the job. Meanwhile Jack Perry and his bunch of slaves demolished an island in the middle of the course to allow a free flow to the stream.

It was an edifying sight to see the river gradually being straightened up and the tall blue gums at the water's edge no longer being menaced by erosion. The weir built by the Putt Construction Co. on a previous working bee is now silted up to a height of 6 feet, so restoring that much of the bank. It has to be seen to be believed.

By late afternoon the river seemed to be under control, the workers were all more or less wet and partly frozen from their companions' misdirected rock lobbings, so Malcolm signified Knock Off time and we returned to camp. However it was just a blind on the part of the wily McGregor; he cruised around till he found the ideal spot for a campfire, stuck a log upright to mark the spot, then let it be known that firewood was wanted. So the shivering sweat-slaves, having knocked off toil in the river, now set to work again chopping up logs and dragging them to the fire site. They did it to get warm more than anything, and a truly colossal heap was the result.

Picture some 80 of us all seated round it at 7.30 p.m. We have some Scouts, the Hobnailers Club and some Brisbane Bushwalkers as guests, and the early part of the evening is bright with song and story-telling. We are waiting for some of the cast to arrive before putting on the opera, but by 9 o'clock Heather has failed to show up so the performance has to begin without her. Its theme is the 85-Miler:

"Geof Wagg, Geof Wagg, can I come on your walk?
All along, out along, down along Cox"

The Crown Street Composers excelled themselves this time. Those who weren't present must be given an opportunity to hear the clever witticisms of our maestros. It is too good to miss.

Midnight saw numerous slumbering bodies by the camp fire, much warmer than the previous night let me add.

Next day there was another hour or so work on the river project, then we played "follow the leader", chasings through the trees, and leap-frog over the tents. Geof thought it was time the climbing rope was "tested" so we tied it part way up a 140 foot dead tree and pulled it down, what time the axemen valiently chopped at its base. Through all these hilarious goings-on the Prospectives were receiving four hours of instructional, which we all felt was much too much. Even the instructors agreed with us, so something ought to be done about it.

Parties began pulling out some time after lunch, and so back up the hill to the waiting cars and motor bikes, or (happy prospect) the 5-mile road bash back to Blackheath railway.

The whole weekend was, as Rosso put it, a might show. "Colossal" agreed Dave.

PADDY MADE

June is here and already there is snow on the slopes with a promise of good ski-ing.

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