

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to the Sydney
Bush Walkers, C/- Ingersoll, 256 Crown St., Sydney.
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264

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COMRADESHIP

Forsooth, brother, comradeship is heaven,
and the lack of comradeship is hell;
comradeship is life, and the lack of comradeship
is death; and the deeds that ye do upon the earth,
it is for friendship's sake that ye do them,
and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on
for ever, and each one of you part of it,
while many a man's life upon the earth from the earth
shall wane.

- John Hall.

2.

AT OUR OCTOBER MEETING.

A misplacement of Minutes delayed the start of the meeting until 8.45, but what it lacked in punctuality it gained in brevity as it ended half an hour later.

The meeting commenced with a warm welcome to a new member, Henry Gould.

Although his September move to have the library sold up had not been approved, Frank Ashdown showed further concern about the management and finances of the library. Replies to his questions were deferred pending enquiries.

A donation from Bob Binks of £2/2/- (£1/1/- for "Yarrowonda" and £1/1/- for "a certain ladder") was acknowledged with thanks. (Those concerned with the manufacture of the ladder are thinking to inscribe one fifth of its rungs "B.BINKS...B.BINKS...B.BINKS...") A further suggestion is that the first rung of this section might be engraved "You are now entering Binks territory - Watch your step", and the last rung, "You are now leaving Binks territory." The only hold up to the scheme is that such engraving might tend to weaken the rungs causing them to collapse and so precipitate some grateful trogo into the murky depths, which would hardly be the end desired by the donor - or would it?)

It was announced that copies of this year's "Skyline" were for sale.

The Social Secretary reported that the Federation Ball had been a social and financial success and had been attended by twenty-nine S.B.Ws.

Members are especially asked to let the Social Secretary know if they intend to attend the Christmas Party. It is very difficult to make arrangements unless the numbers are known beforehand.

- A.G. Colley.

WANTED - A STERIOSCOPIC VIEWER.

First of all, do you know what we mean? A stereoscopic viewer is a gadget through which you look at a double-image photo thereby seeing it in three dimensions instead of only two. In the days before movies this was the way our grandparents spent their Sunday afternoons and party evenings. Bill wants to make a set of glasses for his watch repairing work with the lenses, so if the framework is battered or it has lost its varnish Bill doesn't mind. Surely someone's grandparents have one pushed away somewhere in a dark cupboard. See if you can find one.

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WE WILL BE PLEASED TO QUOTE OTHER TRIPS OR SPECIAL PARTIES
ON APPLICATION.

AND NOW WHAT IN THE MATRIMONIAL FIELD?

In the first place, Bill Gillam and Sylvia were married in August and we overlooked mentioning it in the magazine, for which we apologised to Bill. "That's all right," said Bill, "The Sydney Morning Herald Social Page omitted it too, but we're married just the same."

.....

By the time this is published Greg Hackworthy and Shirley Dickson will be man and wife, married on 27th October, during one of Greg's leave periods before he puts forth to sea again.

.....

The Admiral is engaged to Dawn! Ought we be formal and state that Mr. Brian Anderson and Miss Dawn Askew have announced their engagement, and there's a diamond ring to prove it.

.....

WALKS REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 1956.

- Malcolm McGregor.

The new programme started off well with Jim Hooper's trip. Geof and Grace, Margaret Innes and Henry Gould attended and reported beaut scenery at Wheeny Gap and Lagoon Creek, which also has some superb pools to visit in the warmer weather. A rough trip but not a tough one was the final comment.

For the Saturday trip things looked grim; no one wanted to go. Then bingo! out came some motor cars and Jim took Heather, Snow and Bob Duncan to Newnes State Forest and they climbed Mt. Cameron.

Sunday took Laurie Raynor and John White out from Glenbrook for a pleasant day and John reported that he was actually able to find the Red Hand Cave. It is still there, for those who couldn't find it recently.

The combined trip brought out a total of seven, including three from the C.B.C. The man who knew the way up Black Billy's didn't come so the Admiral led his band up Galong Creek and thence to Megalong. Brian is itching to try out his nautical "skills" in Galong, and when he does I'll be itching to stand on the banks and watch him.

The Saturday trip failed through lack of starters and the leader spent the week-end in bed.

On Sunday Paddy struck trouble at Woodnuts and the party could not get across Cowan Creek. So Paddy set off with his seven hench-men and ladies around Apple Tree Bay to Bobbin Head and up the ridge to the gates. It was reported to me as an excellent day and the flowers were good. Mary Houghton was the sole prospective attending.

George Grey had a week-end at home as his trip had no starters.

Kath Brown substituted a trip from Courijah for the leaderless one on the programme, and Sheila, Joan Cordell and John White went with her. A most pleasant trip followed and they hitched out from Burraborang.

Jess Martin had a highly successful day walk on the 16th with 6 members and 5 visitors. The weather was fine and a first class display of flowers was seen. Jess comments that there doesn't seem to have been many people in this area lately.

Frank Rigby had his trip put into the melting pot for a new leader as his holidays were forced upon him and he was not in town, and as far as is known, no substitute leader was found.

Frank Ashdown's midnight meander on the 22nd failed to come off, again for lack of starters, and the same with Dot Butlers, so we finish up with a very poor set of trips for this month; five did not start and the remainder were poorly attended. The scores were: 35 members, 3 prospectives and 5 visitors.

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THREE MONTHS AMONGST THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS

(Being a letter from Frank Duncan's friend, Walter Trinnick)

When I visited your Club to show movies of New Guinea I mentioned to your President that I might find time to tell the S.B.Ws. about a forthcoming trip of mine, and as he might be expecting me to keep my promise and as the trip is now under way, here goes.

In June my wife Dorothy and I left on Bret Hilder's little boat for three months voyage (Cost £85). ports of call as follows: Lord Howe, Is., Norfolk Is., New Hebrides, Espiritu Santo, Guardalcanal, New Guinea, (and intervening islands) At sea. June.

Sometimes I wonder whether I am dreaming, or whether everything I recall of living in Sydney comes from a recollection of a previous life. Here in a gigantic circle of sea and sky, each of the most vivid translucent blue, our little ship rolls gently along for days on end. Flying fish and majestic albatrosses and hot sun, with everyone in white, make Sydney in wind, rain and cold seem a million miles away instead of a mere 1,500. Though each day since we left Sydney has been perfect, the seas have been very high until this morning when it threatens to become monotonously calm. Part of the day's fun has been to dash across the cargo deck and hatches between waves breaking over the sides without being ducked. Half the crew are Malaysians and the other half Chinese and on such a small ship you get to know them and establish a contact even though they cannot

all speak English. Yesterday we were anchored off an island fishing. I asked our Chinese cabin boy how many he'd caught, and got the reply "oo piss" - which rather rocked me, so I asked again and got the same answer, and then it dawned on me that "oo piss" was his idea of English for "two fish" - and you could read in his face the query "What's the matter with this bloke; he can't understand his own language." And the fish - never seen so many or so big. Every time you throw a line out there's a 20 or 30 lb. one on the hook.

It is strange how our impressions of a place change when we come into close contact with it. Take Norfolk Is. for instance, tied up as it is with our early history. I've always imagined it a tiny, more or less barren little island just off the coast, inhabited by a number of rugged Australians who grew pine trees and sold the seeds to our beach councils. Instead of which I found a slice of the Canadian Rockies with millions of native pines in forests where they'd been growing for centuries - and the cultivated parts a replica of the loveliness of Devon and Somerset in England. As a whole the island looks like a beautiful English park, an effect that is helped by the old English buildings and the old English speech of the Islanders. They are not Australians by any means. All the inhabitants are the descendants of the mutineers of The Bounty, who were transferred from Pitcairn to Norfolk Island 100 years ago. And since the Pitcairners married Tahitian women the islanders of today are a mixture of both, and since they have always been isolated on a small island over the whole period of 130 years, they have retained all their early characteristics - a mixture of dark and fair - slow and exotic - speech still the dialect of old English mixed with the dreamy Tahitian. The women are lovely and langourous like the Tahitians, but the men are a weak looking lot. Without much contact with the outside world there has been much inter-marriage, and there are only about two dozen surnames among the 800 population. Looking at the family tree you see, for instance, a Young marrying a Young. We met a Mrs. Young whose grandmother was one of the original Tahitian girls who married a Mutineer on Pitcairn. It was difficult to follow her half old-English-Tahitian speech. Living still as one big family, too, they're very clannish - every industry that has started on the Island has been either burned down, blown up or sabotaged, with the result that there's no work done except when the steamer calls once every 8 weeks or so, and even then they've got to drag the men on to the job - as for instance on this trip, because of the high seas and the fact that all cargo is taken ashore in surf boats, on several days it was noon before the sea subsided enough to lower the boats. They went ashore to collect the Islanders, but all except three of those whose job it was were dead drunk, and there's no hotel here - the Govt. sells the grog. There are no taxes - no duty - result, cigarettes in Sydney 3/-, here 2/-; cameras in Sydney £120, here £40, etc.

Yesterday I walked 12 miles to collect movies of all the historic spots of pre-mutineer days - the convict settlement - collecting pictures of, for instance, Bloody Bridge where 13 convicts were buried alive among the stones - or Headstone Pt. where a legendary character who escaped the warders and successfully evaded

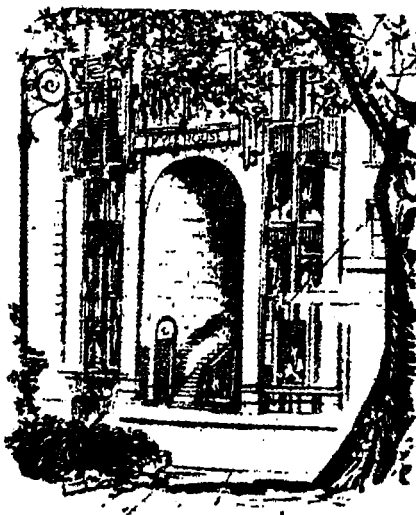
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them for 7 years by living in one of the huge trees, coming out at night to fish - was finally caught and hanged in the town Common. He cursed the two warders who caught him and threatened them with a violent death, and they obliged by getting washed off the rocks a week later.

Being a personal friend of the Captain's, we sit at his table and this, after a really fine dinner, is one of the pleasant events of the day as he regales us with tales of the South Pacific.

We're now off on a 3-day cruise to the next group of Islands - the New Hebrides, where we are promised a mixture of French, British and Tonkinese, as well as natives. There we'll have our swimming and coconut plantations and native villages, so I'll leave anticipation to realisation. Any difficulty you have deciphering this writing you can put down to the violent motion of the ship, plus the effort of writing on my knees and trying to avoid being washed overboard as every now and again a wave breaks over the side.

Espiritu Santo

This is the life! A strange new world indeed - every day teems with stories, mostly about people you meet. There are no secrets or family skeletons; since everyone knows everyone else there is, after all, not much sense.

I've been introduced to Nature's Wonderland too. We were taken in the launch to a lovely coral atoll, with a palm-lined lagoon for swimming and looking at the coral growth. I thought that was something out of the bag until the skipper took me with underwater goggles to the outer reef and there, Presto! I came upon Wonderland. The first sight of it shocked me, I had to come up for air. I just couldn't believe what I had seen so I went down again - into a bright blue - bluer than anything I've ever seen, with literally millions of the brightest coloured fish floating in and out of the coral, and then huge fish that must have weighed between 30 and 50 lbs. just idly swimming around us, barely curious. The transparent blue gradually deepened with depth, and frighteningly lost its transparency as the floor sunk away to greater depths. By way of contrast we visited Million Dollar Point at Espiritu Santo where the Yanks dumped millions of pounds' worth of unused equipment into the sea. Looking at it lying on the bottom of the sea rotting away was indeed an ugly sight.

These islands are mostly French and everything is so different; natives made the islands beautiful - the natives kept them that way, and when the French, Chinese and Tonkinese came and created filthy slums, the natives moved out and built lovely little villages in the jungle a few yards from the sea. We visited several of them and they were a delight - flowers everywhere - not a tree destroyed - and absolute cleanliness. I wonder what they think when they walk down the European street with its lack of drains, its filthy slush and the hovels of the Chinese and Tonkinese who empty all their slops in the street. The French being a carefree race, although clean in themselves, couldn't care less. This New Hebrides group are nevertheless very interesting, but to get anywhere you've just got to brighten up your French.

Rabaul. Aug.1

Just to remind us that the volcano I can see a couple of miles away (Matapi) is still alive and kicking, we have just had three earthquakes in one day - one of them rattled the place like a dice in a box. We climbed to the top of the volcano and looked down into the crater despite the steam and sulphur fumes. It will be almost impossible for you to imagine how hot it is up here at this time of the year. There is no such thing as winter since we are only a few degrees from the equator. It's just Hot and D--Hot. The sun rises and sets at almost the same time every day all the year round. For nearly two months now, since leaving Sydney shivering in the cold, we have not worn more than shorts and shirt and slept bare every night. No one owns a blanket here. We swim every day though it's a waste of time as the water is luke warm. We came on the trip for a rest but up to the present we haven't stopped a

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moment anywhere and have had some really wonderful experiences. The highlight (for me) was at a dream island with limpid lagoons and swaying palm trees where twelve lovely Polynesian girls tried to teach me the hula hula, crowned me with a garland of frangi pani blossoms - then threw me in the lagoon as a token of goodwill, despite the fact that I had shorts, shirt and shoes on. Did they enjoy themselves! And did I? Ask me!

We called at 20 different islands before arriving at Rabaul and have now been here one week during which time we've travelled a few hundred miles into the interior. In a few days we're flying to the famous Sepik River - right away off the beaten track among the most primitive natives whose houses are built over the water. We'll be glad to be on the way for we've attended parties and dinners almost every night till 3 a.m. Anyway, it's too hot to sleep.

Been struggling with the pigeon and gradually learning the hard way. For instance, saw some "boys" with blue lap laps (which means they were prisoners from the kallaboose or jail); no one in charge - they just mow the lawns one blade of grass at a time - so I asked one,

"Why fella you bilong Kalaboose?"

10.

Answer: Me killim Master.

Q. Howlong you stop along Kalaboose?

A. 6 months.

Wow! I thought. Only 6 months for killing his Master, and when I mentioned this to a European he just laughed for killim means hit only. Had he said killim finish it would have meant the real thing. They use it this way also when they are driving the jeep and you want to stop and leave the engine idle you say "You killim engine." To stop car dead - "You killim finish". To park the car you say "Fasim" (fasten).

We were taken in a small ship up the Buka Passage - one of the most beautiful waterways in the world - to meet the Catholic Bishop who is quite an identity, - a jovial old bloke.

Been shooting crocodile and expect to do some more, but as they only come out at night you can't photograph them; instead I'm bringing back a skin just to prove it.

Time is on the wing and the mail leaves in half an hour so cheers. Won't get an opportunity to write any more; we will be living in a native village for about 2 weeks with natives to study their way of life.

Good Bushwalking,

W.T.

PROGRESS REPORT:

In spite of the Woodies' poem, Grace and Geof are still engaged. "You don't have to believe everything you read in print," says Grace, "for instance that bit about the bathroom-floor-flooder...." "Yes," cried Geof triumphantly, "That couldn't be right because I never use the bathroom!"

WINTER MORN

A splash
That's quick as a flash
And a feeling of horror
At each to-morrow..

The horrible fright
May be all right
But I say
Bosh!
Why should a Bushwalker
Wash?

(Anon. N.Z.A.C.)

MT. SONDER. .

- Joan Walker.

It was early afternoon as we waved goodbye to the jeep that had brought us to Glen Helen. That morning we had come the hundred miles from Alice Springs prepared for a week's camp at Glen Helen Gorge on the Finke River, and at Ormiston Gorge, about six miles away.

Leaving our packs on the sandy river bank we skirted the deep waterhole blocking the northern end of the gorge, and, cameras at the ready, pussy-footed to a vantage point a quarter of a mile away.

Behind us, the long straight ridge we had left, running East to West to the limits of vision, with the broad and sandy Finke swinging in beneath its steep red cliffs. In front, mile after mile of plain cut by cattle tracks weaving between the mulga and broken by scattered ridges, 50 ft. or so high, of red quartzite or the more startling chocolate brown limestone. Over and beyond these our eyes were drawn irresistibly to the great bulk of Mt. Sonder. We had first seen it, almost ice-blue - the three peaks clear against the sky - from Hermansburg twenty miles away. Now it showed long ridges of blue running up to the cliff faces shadowed in purple. There was only one decision possible; it had to be visited and, if the gods were willing, climbed.

Meanwhile to camp and the search for H₂O. There was water a-plenty in the river - with a saline content comparable to seawater. A search on the hillside yielded some which was excellent for cooking - no need to add salt to our stews - but not so good for our "cuppas". A blazing fire, a large steak, a soft camp spot, and life was good - so much so that even the dingoes chasing cows on the plain barely disturbed our rest.

An early rising one morning, and out to watch the sun light up Sonder catching the cliffs first and turning them red, then gradually, as the light became higher, the purple shadows returned.

Across the plain we started, ignoring the cattle pads and plunging bravely through the spinifex to each hill top so that we might admire again the colours of Sonder and the shadows on the scalloped ridges of the Ormiston. A choice of two routes seemed open to us: to follow the western ridge which clearly swung in a great bend to the furthest peak, or forge straight ahead up the ridges mounting to the base of the main peak. A short scramble through a saddle should then put us in a position to walk up from the northern side. This we decided on, but alas, we forgot how strange this land is. Up the ridges which should have led to the main line, down into the gullies which magically appeared and isolated each from its neighbour. Once. Twice. But then at last the main ridge. Up, up and over. In front the ridge dropped steeply to a valley practically enclosed by that despised western ridge on whose southern bend we stood. Two miles away, across the valley, the true ridges of Mt. Sonder rose. Two miles away! Time had beaten us, but we could still admire, and that we did as we boiled our billy and dreamt of how, one day, we should return and reach the summit.

FEDERATION REPORT - OCTOBER.

- Allen A. Strom.

Enquiry has shown that Window Displays inviting membership of Bushwalking Clubs will be accepted by The County Council (Queen Victoria Buildings), The Tourist Bureau and Kodaks. Steps will be taken to organise these displays.

The affiliation with The N.S.W. Sports Federation will be continued with Paul H. Barnes acting as delegate.

An enquiry was received from The Eureka Youth League Bushwalking Club regarding affiliation with the Federation. Information will be forwarded.

Following upon the occurrence of a vacancy on The Heathcote Primitive Reserve Trust, Paul H. Barnes was nominated by Federation.

The Department of Lands has refused to resume Panorama Lookout (Kurrajong Heights) as the landholder intends to develop the area as a tourist attraction.

Tom Moppett was nominated by the Federation to fill a vacancy that has occurred on The Fauna Protection Panel.

Approximately 154 persons were present at The Federation Ball held on October 6th. A profit of about £35 is expected.

The Assistant Information Officer (Paul Driver) is still not receiving adequate support from Clubs in his efforts to collect Walks Reports. He also indicates that the Reports should contain information valuable to Beginners.

A meeting of the Junior Walks Committee elected Stan Cottier as Secretary. The first walk is scheduled for the weekend, Nov. 17/18. It will be for boys. Stan Cottier will be contacting prospective leaders.

Bushfire Fighting or Propaganda Work? Which is preferred? Organiser of Patrols, Bruce Little, would like to know your answer and at the same time receive an up-to-date list of volunteers. His Address is 29 High St. Canterbury.

A Track over Bushwalkers' Hill to by-pass the Glenraphael Swamp will be cut on week-end Nov. 11/12th. Help required. Turn up with cutting gear.

A report to hand says that a road has been cut into Church Creek Caves area. Enquiries into land tenures in the area will be undertaken.

The Federation still requires a Publicity Officer. Have we a volunteer?

Premier Cahill has assured us that no alienation of land will take place along the railway line in The Royal National Park.

TURN ABOUT

- Jim Brown.

From the "Sydney Morning Herald" of July 7th, 1956:

"A man who lives in a cave in Roseville Chase was fined £15 with 10 guineas costs by Mr. A.E. Hodgson, S.M., in Central Summon Court yesterday, for "staying overnight in a public reserve."

I repeat, "for staying overnight in a public reserve."

Dear Brethren (and Sestern) Bushwalkers, Did you ever realise what you may be up for when you stayed overnight in a Reserve? Did you not think? "Here we are, safe and sound, no Lord Mayors of Yerranderie, no camping fees, no "Trespassers Prosecuted" or "Keep Out" or "Beware Man Traps" notices. Why, some Reserves even furnish fire places and tanks of water and shelter sheds - sprats to catch mackerel! - springs to catch woodcocks! All these facilities may now be turned into baits and traps.

Look at it clearly. In these days of adverse trade balances and falling wool prices, can the Government afford to ignore such a revenue-producing potential as the Public Reserve? It is my glum forecast that in the next few months there will be a highly confidential report to the Minister for Lands from the Departmental Under Secretary. It will commence like this:-

"In response to your memorandum on the request from the Premier, I have to report as follows:-

Vast areas of Crown Land exist which have not been proclaimed or gazetted or dedicated as public reserves. Throughout these expanses of countryside, travellers of all kinds may spend nights out of doors without exacting any penalty. The revenue potential must be recognised, and it is therefore recommended that all the regions specified in Appendix "A" be dedicated as public reserves as early as practicable. A priority should be given to the Greater Blue Mountains National Park as the reservation of this region has been the subject of correspondence received by this Department over the past 25 years, and it is very common for travellers to stay overnight in its precincts.

Further consideration might be given to the resumption of smaller portions of alienated land, nominated in Appendix "B", where such places lend themselves to overnight camping, as it is believed the revenue which would be derived would rapidly redeem the small capital cost of re-purchase"

You see the trend of things? Next will be another newspaper item:-

"HIKERS' CAMP RAIDED"

"In the Central Summons Court today evidence was given

that four hikers had been detected camping overnight in the Blue Mountains Reserve. Police officers stated that they had been found encamped on Kedumba Creek, just below the Eight-Foot Track, about fifty miles north-east of Wentworth Falls. Fines totalling £54 were imposed."

Next from the Monthly Walks Report:-

"Great difficulty is being experienced in obtaining leaders to carry out overnight camping walks. Every day walk on the programme has been filled."

From the Federation Bulletin:-

"The Information Bureau is obtaining as much data as possible concerning privately owned land in the bush, where walking parties may camp without the risk of incurring fines for staying overnight in Reserves. Efforts will be made to reach satisfactory arrangements with the landowners."

From the S.B.W. Magazine:-

"We knew we were under observation, and although Joe had a broken collarbone and Anastasia was suffering considerably from a sprained ankle and many abrasions, we continued walking in the moonless night and the continuous downpour until we came to Carlon's fence at about 3.30 a.m. Then we collapsed into our tents, while the thwarted Reserve Ranger turned away to look for other victims."

From a newspaper Court report:-

"The police officers stated that, on their approach, the young man hastily ran into thick scrub but was apprehended at the edge of a 200 ft. precipice. A search at the foot of the cliff produced a sleeping bag, a hiker's tent, and a small badge in the form of a flannel flower. He denied that these articles were his property and stated that he was doing a day hike from Lithgow to Goulburn. The case was dismissed."

From the Minutes:-

"Moved by the Conservation Secretary and resolved -
'That we write to the Minister for Lands protesting against the proclamation of any further public reserves, as it is considered that the 73.16% of the State so dedicated is ample for recreational purposes'".

And from the Minister:-
(the usual)

"Your representations have been received and will be considered."

WEEK-END WITH THE PUTT-PUTT FLOTILLA

- Dot Butler.

The starting off place was Bobbin Head, and at 8 p.m. on the Friday evening twenty of us made our way there by bus or private car. Heavens! What's this? Seven bodies, together with packs and primuses and Pete's crutches (not to mention Pete himself), all pouring forth from the Dalai Lama's small car.

While "Mr. Stitt" disappeared into the boat-keeper's sanctum to attend to the hiring formalities, the rest of us were busy loading ourselves and our gear into the five boats. Geof was worried at first that he and Grace hadn't been allotted a mechanic, and had visions of his boat stalling in mid-Hawkesbury at midnight and himself incompetent to fix it, but when George Grey joined his crew the problem was solved.

By 9 o'clock the last tank had been filled and the last bilge pumped dry, and with filled water buckets dangling from the rowlocks the small fleet putted out among the expensive launches and Halvorsen cruisers anchored in the bay and headed downstream in the moonlight.

The boats were lovely faithful little beasts; we grew very fond of them before the trip was over. If they happened to run aground on mud banks in the dark, that wasn't due to any inherent crankiness but was the fault of the helmsman. The mechanics of the $3\frac{1}{2}$ h.p. motor was simplicity itself - you gave a small lever a 90 degree turn, you wrapped a belt round a shaft and pulled it off again with a mighty sweep and hastily turned a small knob to 2 or 3 on the scale which made the petrol drip out slow or fast, and away you went. Even I could understand it. The motors followed the All or Nothing Law, that is to say they had only two speeds - Full Speed Ahead, or Dead Stop, and full speed was 3 knots, more or less. Those that were "more" gradually drew ahead of those that were "less" and myself in the second last boat had the satisfaction of knowing that there was still one boat behind ours as I kept my eye on the flickering will-o'-the-wisp ahead that gave me the position of the vessels manned by Hooper and the Admiral, Pete and the Dalai Lama, and Geof and George, with their respective fair passengers. The different boats organised their affairs to suit themselves. Our boat agreed on 3-hourly shifts among the three of us. In theory this meant that the two off duty could have 6 hours sleep. (Of course it didn't work out that way!)

Standing up on the back seat with the tiller between my ankles, keeping in sight the dark bulk of the forward boats in the moonlight, or the gleam of their torches in the dark, with Snow asleep on the floor and John and the two little boys asleep on the seats, and the gentle putt-putt-putt of the motor - so under the Hawkesbury River railway bridge and the road bridge without eventualities. About half an hour after midnight John woke up to have a look-see, and at 1 a.m. my shift terminated and I jumped into my sleeping bag and was asleep in a matter of seconds. Suddenly John was shouting, "Quick, quick, Wake Snow!" I prodded Snow who sat up half asleep

and said "What's up?" What was up was that we had just run on to a mudbank. Sweet girlish voices issued from the gloom, "Are you on it too?" and we recognised the voices as belonging to Bev and Joan. They were the sirens whose flickering torch had lured John to destruction, but how they had got ahead of us will remain an unsolved mystery. There was much lunging in the marsh, so to speak, with John and Snow up to their knees in black mud, but by pushing and pulling and making use of the oars we at last got off and putted round in a circle and helped the others off. Then, as our vessel seemed disinclined to stop we shouted Good-bye to the girls and George's curly-headed brother Bob who was pulling over the engine, and that was the last any of us saw of them until Saturday night.

Eventually one became aware of the dawn through a scent of orange blossom and petrol and exhaust fumes, and the next coherent picture is of all the party, minus the three mudlarks, pulled up at the Wiseman's Ferry wharf for breakfast. Someone suggested a swim but was howled down because of the danger of sharks. The Dalai Lama's voice issued derisively from out the hairy forest of beard and yak-skin hat:

"Look," said he, "All this talk of sharks is a gross exaggeration. In all the times I've been coming up here I've only seen two or three people taken by sharks."

How many times had he been up here?

"Oh, two or three."

There were no takers for the swim.

Breakfast over and still no sign of Bob's boat, so we left a note for him on the wharf and putted off past the citrus orchards and farms and a speed-boat with two aquaplaners soaring in its wake, and a large guest house and various mudbanks, sandbanks, rockbanks, shags, sea-eagles and wild ducks, mangrove swamps, willow trees and rugged eucalyptus-clothed hillsides, and so to the entrance of the Colo. Here at water level were some massive square rock formations which Geof was sure were boat-houses and he wanted to drive the boat into one of them, but was restrained. "I will on the way back then," said Geof.

It wasn't long before a really inviting sandy beach came into view, and without question every boat made straight for it. Soon we were all in swimming - except Pete in his plaster of course. He entertained himself by chugging up and down the river with Heather and Dot Barr and Foxa hanging on to a rope out the back. They seemed to be enjoying it so the rest of us had a go too. Then, alas, this innocent pastime palled and we find the jackals looking round for some prey to harry. The Admiral and Hooper happen to be in their boat, so they are pushed off into midstream. As if this were not enough, a body leaps in and takes their starter-strap, and then their boat is towed to the other side of the river and left there. O how unkind! Poor Admiral.

There had been a lot of talk, "Do we move off now or do we wait till the change of the tide at midnight?" Eventually the "Now's" won

so we packed up and away, the idea being to camp for the night somewhere near Wiseman's Ferry. At Wiseman's we bought petrol and ice-creams but the river-bank didn't look a very inviting camp spot so off again. There was much shouted instruction that we would camp at Rose's Reach, but no-one knew where Rose's Reach was, and after a lot of zig-zagging across the river with night rapidly drawing on, finally the Admiral and the two following boats drew up at a public camping reserve complete with shelter sheds and rubbish tins and the usual two concrete edifices. There were loud shouts of horror from the two last boats, but the Admiral said, throwing off all responsibility, "Nobody could agree where we wanted to stop so I pulled in to give them a chance to make up their minds." Well, their minds were made up for them by the two back boats which just kept going, so the others up-anchored and followed. The sun had set when we spotted a nice flat deserted orchard. We pulled the boats up the mudbank, and having asked for and obtained permission to camp, soon tents were up and campfires were alight and tea was on the way despite the low level of water in most waterbuckets. We are reminded of Diogenes, the ancient Greek, going round with his lantern seeking one honest man, as we see the Admiral going from group to group with a mug hooked over his finger saying "I am looking for one simple friend...that is to say, one mug of water."

The young Butler-buds were bedded down under a tree, the two Dots and John and Snow occupied a series of transverse furrows in the ploughed field with a fire at their feet, and the rest of the party repaired to tents and no one stirred for at least 9 hours.

Sunday dawned fine, with a scent of orange blossoms in the air and the tide gone down and Geof's boat standing on its hindquarters in the mud with its nose in the air. The other boats were not quite so badly off, but it was a mud-to-the-knees job getting them off.

There was much swopping over of passengers among the boats, and a few tense episodes when John and Snow ran amuck and rammed other boats, and pleasant hours of sunbaking on the roofs counting the coloured jellyfish that swarmed in countless thousands in the water.

We pulled in at the Fisherman's Retreat for petrol and water and were eyed off by a shelf-ful of surly tomcats who watched us over their salty folded paws as we went up the track with our water buckets, and swung all their surly heads in unison as we returned and watched us off the wharf again. On shore, bounding through the mangroves and over muddy oyster-encrusted rocks a black dog chased ahead of our boat, the Dalai Lama explaining to two wide-eyed little boys and a delighted Foxa that it was an eight-knot water wombat.

The next port of call was the wreck of the "Parramatta", a great metal hulk lying with its back broken in only a few feet of water. It had gone ashore on a flood tide years ago when the cables towing it broke. We climbed up and over and down and through its various apertures, then as the tide was rapidly going down and grounding our boats we had to leave. There's Dot calling two reluctant little boys out of the red-rusted boiler, and Geof calling fruitlessly to Grace who had gone off up the precipice to a waterfall to get water as she had not been with us when we got ours at the tomcats' wharf.

There was no future in landing for lunch with the tide dropping

18.

so rapidly, so we tethered all the boats together nose to tail in mid-stream, turned off the motors, and drifted with the tide as we lunched. Then the motors were started up again, with the next stop Hawkesbury River settlement. Here the petrol hunt was on again. Likewise the beer hunt on the part of Hooper, the Admiral, Snow and the Dalai Lama. The rest of us were playing round jumping on some big oil drums on the wharf when a disgusted Admiral returned to say they were chucked out of the pub before they had even got into it, the reason being that customers were not admitted in bare feet. So the four of them put on their shoes and we watched them set off again, the Admiral wearing his glasses and a shirt (Oh yes, and swimming trunks on underneath, but you couldn't see them) AND shoes, and the Dalai Lama clad in (reading from north to south) a yak-skin hat, a beard, a pair of dirty shorts AND shoes, and Snow and Hooper not much better but with their indecent feet clothed in cowhide. They showed the dubious doorman their feet and he had to admit them.

We waited a reasonable length of time, then Geof went up to hurry them on their way, but he returned, beaten, and suggested that we all go and bring our wandering ones back by force. This was a mighty idea. Ah, here they come, the sluggards, sauntering down the middle of the road four abreast. As we strode towards them they stopped in their tracks, then started walking backwards slowly a pace at a time, then they turned suddenly and ran off at top speed with the rest of us in pursuit. This incredible sight held the population of Hawkesbury River dumfounded. Unsuccessful, we called the chase off and returned to the boats, and soon our lost four came sneaking back and we pushed off. But what had the Demon Drink done to Hooper and the Admiral? Their boat was the last to cast off, and as we others drew away we could see consternation written on the faces of Vivienne and Dawn as the Admiral and Hooper dodged in and out amongst the piers, ramming first one set of posts and then another. (See Hooper's sketch).

There was now a heavy swell coming in from the sea, and we lunged and bounced over the waves in a most exciting fashion with spray flying. Then we joined company with other homing craft and chugged in to Bobbin Head about 5.30.

Finally the last boat was in and all our gear unstacked and taken up to the cars, and then the big reckoning was on. "How much did you pay for deposit? How much did you pay for Petrol? How much was the boat hire? That makes how much for 5 boats? How many people were there, counting Dot's offspring as one? Divide that into that and take off that and you get what?" The calculations went on and on - that was George's job because he's a school teacher - and Heather acted as bank. When they finally got to the end of it Heather announced that she was £1/16/8 short. "Of course," said Joan and Bev, "We could have told you that in the beginning. You divided by 19 instead of 18." Oh what a gentleman George is; he didn't wring their necks for them.

Then off to the waiting bus and the cars and homeward bound, twenty nautical lubbers turned landlubber again.

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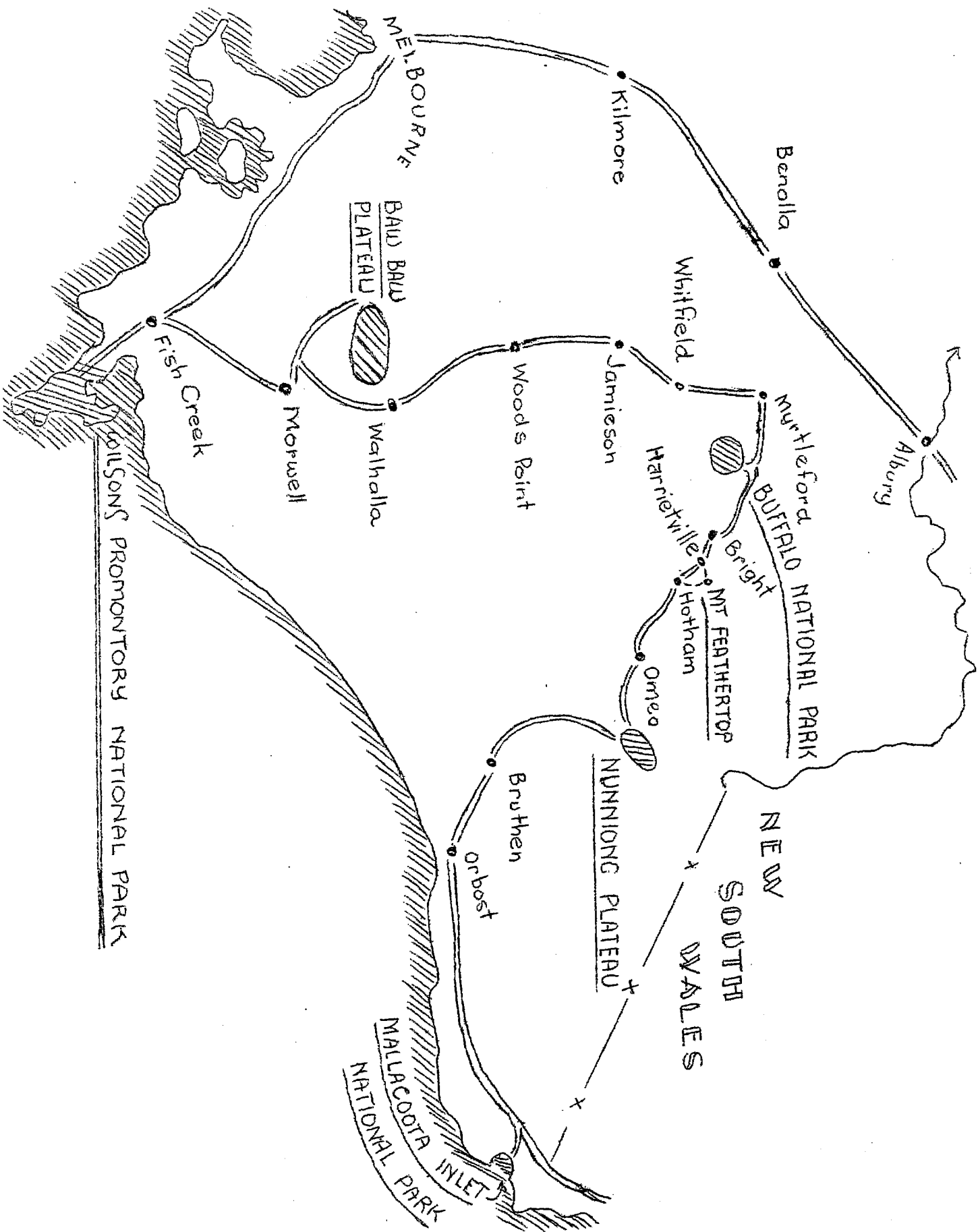
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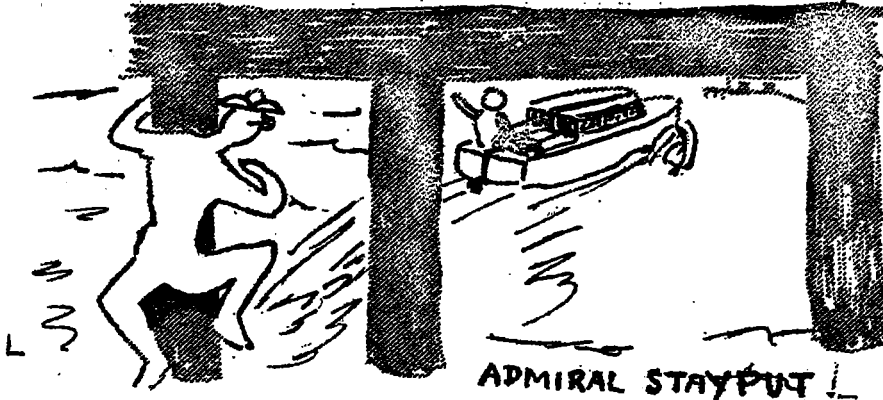
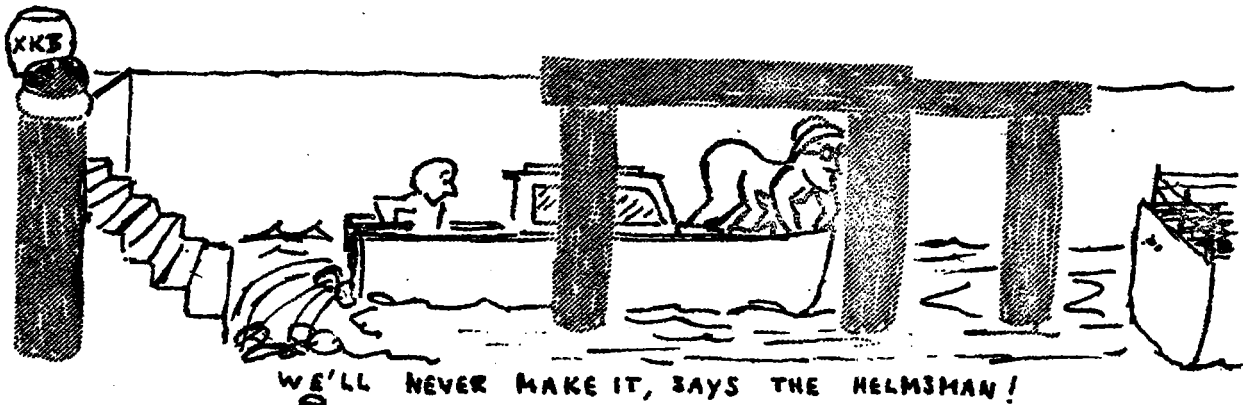
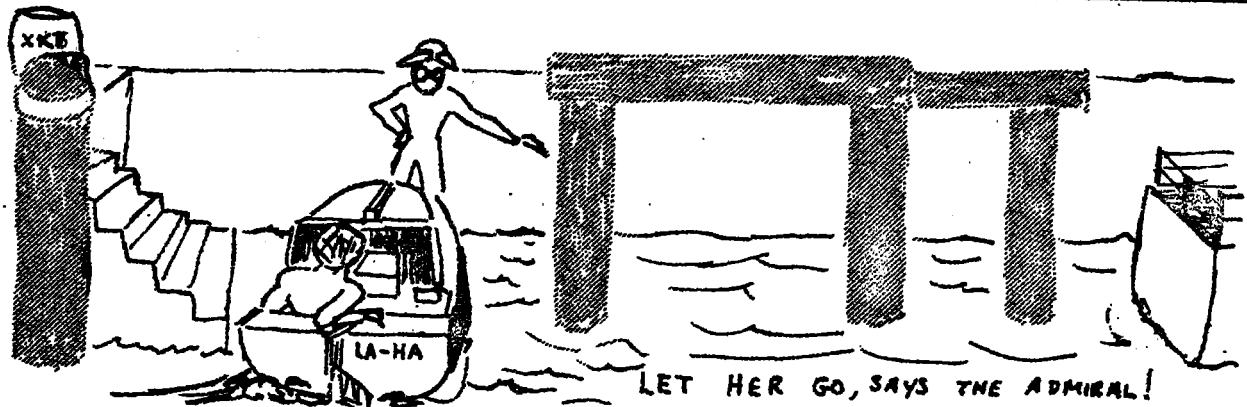
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