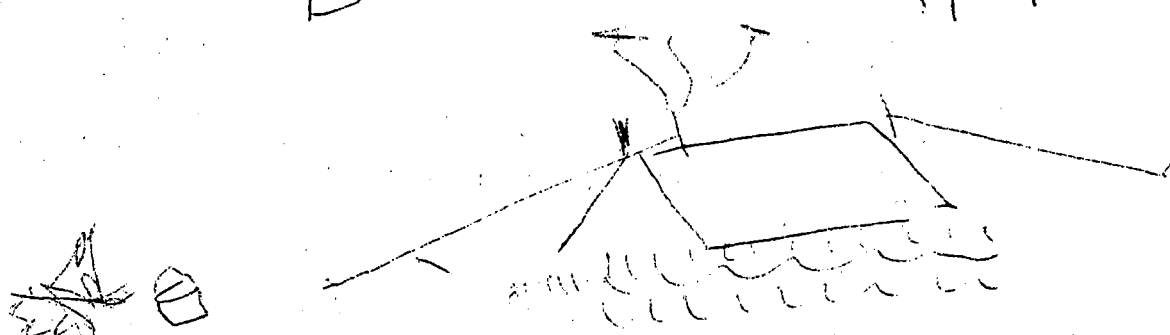


THE SYDNEY BUSH WALKER

APRIL
1969



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A monthly bulletin of matters of interest
to the Sydney Bushwalkers, Northcote
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OBSERVER.

(The social science known as anthropology takes as its method the watching, spying on of primitive people, reporting on their ceremonies, how they hold their babies, their ritual and their drink. This is a different approach to the "rat-people" who apply a scanty knowledge of human behaviour to devising puzzles for rodents. Your Observer couldn't get Margaret Mead on short notice to cover the Reunion, nor could he persuade the Trainwatcher to extend his area of interest to reporting. It looks like being a bad year for reporters, typists and handle-turning-paper-chewing-ink-spitter outers. If you don't volunteer you will like what is given to you.)

All people have rituals and in all ritual there must be a specific place, a sacred grove. The English crown their kings on a chair cover - a stone dragged from Scotland, some say pinched; the seat is of Irish oak which has caused at least one candidate to have second thoughts about sitting there. The Bushies are content to go to the same place at the appointed time, light a big fire and hang artifacts of bone around the neck of the chosen leader. Thus installed the new man says a few words, his followers drink cocoa to mark the occasion after which most retire leaving a few of the elders to pass the revered bowl and tend the sacred fire until damper cooking the following day. As long as it is held at the one place variation in time and place of this apparently loosely structured pattern will send the tribe into frantic soul searching and misgiving.

Your cunning observer knew that the ceremony is always held during the wettest time of the year so he arranged to leave his home after tea, thus being assured of that meal, and to arrive when the fire had been lit and the ceremony about to take place. True to his past experience it rained mightily at the time of the evening meal. The track to the creek was at its normal stage of savage slipperiness. The members of the tribe were using the fire to dry out their clothes and bones and at first glance were distributed in random fashion - old members with new, children bearded ones with non-beards or recently de-bearded, visitors, non-members and even some from a different nation otherwise known as a Scoop of Trouts.

The sole remaining baritone baritone was leading a chant remembered from the distant migration from a colder, more rigorous, less languorous land where there was still a tradition of fist fighting and horseracing, due to the fact that the traditional drink was something stronger than cocoa.

I was told that one of the members had sung to a guitar before I arrived, this being the first time in recent memory that it had occurred. Desultory attempts were made to keep the singing going, some knew a few of the words, others the bones of the rhythm. This is a universal thing. My own society having lost the ability to write and sing motets now listen to machine sounds.

When the singing ceased there was a pause until the next shower when it is traditional to install the new leader. A leader "done" in heavy rain ensures a good year for the tribe. Trips will return on time, it will be a good year for snow and no constitutional amendments will rise to trouble his sleep. It rained, the fire smoked, the former leaders lined up with the carved bones and they were passed on for one more year. I say passed for the strings, always adequate before would not pass completely over the new leader's head. It was too large or too hairy or its great thickness coincided with his nose. From his ear a boot pendant, from his nose a flower. In another society it would have been an omen of a breakdown in public relations. For those who could see through the smoke it was merely another sign of The Changing of the Times. They had elected the first Flower Child Leader.

The shuffling line formed up for cocoa, well lit and available and sugar, poorly lit and hidden. The children went to bed; if they slept the elders returned. Those with larger children recounted how their children, magically, were now bigger than they were and were rebellious and would not come to the ceremony, or were bigger and came and competed with their elders and so were just as much a problem. The elder elders told tales to the less elder elders as they brought out and circulated the bowl; the essence rather than the substance of the reunion. Sips from the bowl were hurriedly given to those who had to carry sleeping children up the hill so that the sleeping children could play football on the morrow, after the elders had marked out the pitch. (The decline in the bullfight and the subsequent decline in the sense of honour and well being among the Spaniards has been attributed to the erosion caused by El Futebal.)

Midnight came and went. The elder elders talked on. Rain came, rain stopped. The fire burned brightly and steadily on. Before dawn the bowl ran dry. My wife, who is incurably suspicious of the native women, insisted I leave. An elder elder sat wondering where he had put his tent so many hours earlier. There were two people, one with the full beard of tribal custom, guarding the sacred fire. All due ceremony had been kept.

After the bowl, when the sun had long been up, it

is customary to take of thick coffee and thin toast, and then to tour. One tours in the cold light of day to see how well preserved, or otherwise everyone is, to see whose children have grown predicting from the dietary habits, long remembered, of the parents. The children and the elders gather for the comic races in which everyone wins a prize. In one tent a woman is preparing a damper. Time for me to go. I haven't liked damper, in any stage, since I saw one dropped and things kneaded into it.

Stopping for breath halfway up the hill the first lines of a poem came to me:

"The cruel girls we loved are over forty...."
Some day I will look up the complete poem.

COMMENTATOR.

It seemed as though the Era Trust Fund had always been there. They never grew while possible land grew dearer and dearer relative to the fund. And that possible land seemed to be so far away as to make any proposition only a convenient excuse to be done with the fund. Bendethra was the only sign of life in recent years but on any map it was right down at the bottom; beautiful, enticing, but in the end unattainable. Perhaps just as well.

What does the trust deed require? Generally it speaks of conservation, recreation, walking and similar concepts. The purchase of the land certainly meets the requirements of the deed. Our administration of the land is going to be another matter. For the first time we are to meet, as a club, the problems of the statutory public things. Land rates - a charge on club revenue? Pasture protection - do we shoot the rabbits, who has set a rabbit trap lately? Blackberries, saffron thistle - The land has been used for farming and grazing. Ungrazed there will be a botanist's bestiary. Fire protection. Fences.

And what of the land itself. A "primitive area" concept springs to mind but is obviously unworkable. The environment has been so radically altered that the haphazard regrowth would be like all other haphazard regrowth. One basic principle or primitive areas is the absence of wheeled vehicles and the restriction of camping. One of the reasons for the amazing freedom from devastation of the former Heathcote Primitive Area is the absence of wheeled visitors. We cannot hope to distinguish between wheeled conservationists and wheeled picnickers. Access through the Friends land could discourage random picnickers. Access through the Friends land could discourage random visitors but not "recreational campers" in the know. Is this the object of the deed? When Era was held under the deed anyone who had walked there could camp. If someone puts up a tent and stays there for six weeks do we merely have six degrees of distaste for him? Or do we charge him ^{and} pay the rates, mend the fences and build a double brick toilet for him. Do we build a toilet? Do we encourage people to camp, to re-une there. A continuously camped area, a virgin area, mown grass. By-laws or pleasant anarchy.

Reafforestation - the word seems like a double positive - would seem to be one of the first schemes to investigate. The land is of so many different levels, almost completely denuded of green trees. The casuarinas along the river will go when the dam is finished - the replacement trees should go in soon. Grove trees to give

areas with the atmosphere of Blue Gum can be planted and be secure, tall trees within five years. Woodlots of quick growing trees would provide "thinings" when the present ringbarked trees are burnt for fuel. Deliberate recreation of a rain forest with cedars, syncarpias, coachwoods and sassafras would not be too difficult. A comprehensive "small plant" - comprehensive in that all native plants could be tried - would be very real conservation.

The dam itself would create many visitors passing the land. This is at once a threat to overuse the area if some selection is not made in restricting access to the land and a chance to show some deliberately planned conservation to people who think, sadly, that National Parks are just a lot of scrub providing Sunday parking for a barbecue.

For the moment some sort of "town plan" needs to be made - selection of permanent camping areas and fire-places, some sort of water reticulation from the existing spring, and provision of road access, tracks, toilets. Policy on camping, financing and forecasting expenditure, means to implement plans and meet lease conditions would be a part of the "town plan".

When the plan has been accepted a "Committee of Management" would need to be elected. They could take as their motto "Urge, urging, urgent."

Trains and Names.

Jim Brown.

An open letter to KathMackay in Perth, in answer to her article about trains in the February magazine.

Yes, Kath, I think you have something. Myself, I deplore exotic names like "Southern Aurora", whilst sadly recognising that my preference for the old "Melbourne Limited Express" is rather futile. You can't expect Melbournians to call it the "Melbourne Limited" when it goes to Sydney.

Just the same I rather like the idea of naming trains and locomotives - provided the names are not those of current politicians or Governors. I don't mind the names of early pioneers or explorers: the suspect "S" class 4-6-2 Pacific steam engine that used to haul the Victorian "Spirit of Progress" (ugh!) were Edward Henty, Mathew Flinders, C.J. Latrobe etc.

Named trains also pass. The erstwhile Federal City Express (Sydney-Canberra) and Southern Highlands Express (Sydney-Goulburn) sounded good to me. Although the Caves Express went only to Mount Victoria, quite a way from Jenolan Caves, it certainly qualified as "express" but there was a time when the Cooma Mail (all stops after Campbelltown) was loosely styled "Kosciusko Express".

Way back in the war years the Western Australian Par. class "Pacific locomotives were named after Westralian rivers. In an old note book I can still see a record of trips behind them -

20.2.43 Claremont-Northam No.138 (Ashburton)
4-6-2

12.9.43 Perth-Chilows No.139 (Avan) 4-6-2

15.9.43 Southern Cross-Kalgoorlie No. 140
(Blackwood) 4-6-2

So far as our mother State is concerned, I think there have been four only named locomotives, unless one goes very far back to the early days of railway construction.

These four were "Hunter" and "Hawkesbury" (Nos 3608 and 3609 of the 4-6-0 "36" class) used mainly on Newcastle Expresses of the 1936-38 period: and "Illawarra" and "Cambewarra" (Nos. 3306 and 3374 of the "32" class) working the South Coast Daylight Expresses.

All four names appealed to me. Unfortunately, as additional engines in both "36" and "32" classes were painted in green livery instead of the drab black with red lining, it became the practice to attach "Hunter" and "Hawkesbury" name plates to whichever "36" was rostered for the Newcastle

Flyer, and "Illawarra" to the "32" doing the Nowra day train on any particular day.

This seemed all wrong to me and I was quite glad when the name plates disappeared. I believe one rail enthusiast has acquired a "Cambewarra" plate, and it is now his household name in the Liverpool area.

Both "Illawarra" and "Cambewarra" went to the scrappers in 1967-8. "Hunter" has gone too, but 3609 "Hawkesbury" is the engine of its class selected for preservation in a museum.

If our locals ever decide to try it again, I hope they will select place names, or plants or creatures. After all, the all-time steam speed record (126 mph) was established over 30 years ago by the London & North-Eastern Pacific "Mallard" - one of a group named for birds.

But please, not Sir George Throgmorton or Dame Z - well, you know.

Anyway, they'll be clean, efficient, soul-less diesel-electrics, so does it matter what they call them?

Kind regards and happy travelling.

The Four Footed Finch.

Pat Harrison.

For the walk on 8/9 March one car arrived at Carrington Falls at 11 p.m. on the Friday, one at 12.45 a.m. on the Saturday, one about 7 a.m. and the last about 8 a.m.

After a dewy moonlight night 15 walkers set out on a clear morning after safely putting the cars out of reach of the picnickers who frequent the Carrington Falls area.

The party went down the Mystery Track to the Kangaroo River and there was only one minor incident at the start of the track when Frank Rigby's pack was wilfully concealed among the Callicoma bushes; but his look was so stern and his beard so red and bristling that the offenders quailed before his eye and the pack was quickly produced.

The track is old but still very evident, for a lot of hard work once went into the cutting of the steps in the rock. Someone has recently placed aluminium markers on the trees as a help in locating the track. The route goes down a cool, mossy gully, the floor of which at the time we went down was thickly carpeted with the fallen flowers of the numeroud Coachwood trees.

The Kangaroo River was reached not far upstream from the pronounced bend made by its junction with Dtharowal Creek. The bed of the river is cheked with boulders and shelves of rock, the latter showing up nicely with a tablecloth of star-shaped Coachwood blooms. The Sassafrass trees overhanging the water were nodding their white flowers, and it was altogether a cool restful spot that engendered nothing more energetic than a leisurely bout of spine bashing; but this was soon put a stop to by Master Finch's announcement that we were all going upstream to see Carrington Falls from the bottom (having seen them from the top before we broke camp this morning).

"Only about a mile" he said (everybody else was too lethargic to look at a map), and the party set out with great dash across, around, and over the gibbers; but an hour and a half later only 7 had reached the foot of the falls and the others had fallen along the way. The boulders were not as big as houses (to use Marion Lloyd's vivid description of another stream) but they were big enough.

From the foot of the Falls Doone Wyborn and Gerry Sinzig performed the hairy feat of climbing up the side and waving to us from the top.

Back to the rest of the party for lunch, and thereafter the afternoon was a rock hop for about three hours

and it would have been pleasant enough but for the fact that the boulders and shelves of rock had no colour in them and the cliffs were the same uninspiring colour. We eventually came upon an old road where we killed a large, cranky-looking brown snake which Doctor Wyborn dissected with the aid of a stone axe.

The scenery was getting better, Red Cedar trees lined the track, grassy flats flitted by under our swift feet, and Bill Gillam pulled the greatest confidence trick of all time by persuading us we were where we weren't. He really wanted to make camp early because of all the goodies in his pack. But it was a good campsite and after the washing up had been done the singers did a good job for several hours.

As we went down the valley on Sunday morning it opened out into lush green fields of pasture, dotted here and there with contented cows that gave us the usual close scrutiny. Near Gerringong Creek there is a suspension bridge upon which a lot of energy was worked off before regaining it by tucking into the nearby blackberry bushes.

We crossed Gerringong Creek at the ford at 615164 and soon afterwards went up a road that for steepness would take some beating. We walked through beautiful country with ever-increasing views of the Kangaroo Valley until we came to an old slab house at 634166. It is only used for storing hay now, but it is still a wonderful example of bush carpentry, made of solid slabs shaped by the adze and as stout and upright today as the day it was built. We went up over the ploughed shelf of land between the house and the timber at the bottom of the cliffs, walked through the growing cornfield, and got up on to the plateau at the saddle at 644163.

Where we left the corn paddock there was a large spreading Red Cedar growing by itself, and a little distance away at the bottom of the timber line there were several fine large specimens of Gully Ash. There was also an old track up to the saddle, faint at the bottom but very pronounced where it reaches the saddle.

The 2064 foot feature is a grassy dome, and it was just beyond here that we encountered four ponies. One of them was a young colt and another was its apparent mother, already heavy with the next addition to the family. This mare was very tame and very friendly and she came up and allowed us to rub her nose, and she unhesitatingly accepted the biscuits we gave her - so much so that someone described her as The Four Footed Finch. When the supply of biscuits gave out she began to nuzzle into the packs and was becoming a bit of a lovable nuisance so we set off at high speed for our luncheon spot at Gerringong Falls. These falls are very high and very beautiful. I suppose they must be about 500

feet high.

Two hours for lunch, a good swim in an excellent pool, more Finchian activities (He's done it again!) when his clothes were concealed, and we were back at Carrington Falls at 3.30 p.m.

The plateau around Gerringong Falls has been badly burnt out, but as it is flat and open it looked very attractive with the contrast between the blackened tree trunks and the fresh green grass.

TARO'S EUCALYPT.

Over fifty years am I - tall and free
Yet young, as Nature sees age.
Taro it was who planted me,
Taro the sage.

Nigh ninety now is he; as Man deems, old --
Yet his thoughts go soaring out
Untrammelled by years, eager, bold!
"TARO" they shout.

When fifty years more have come and are past
Like Taro the Man, himself,
This eucalypt will stand fast...
Taro! What wealth!

Footnote: The writer of this, Esme Biddulph, together with two young grand-daughters, went to visit Taro recently. They had never been before to Taro's Domain and were enchanted and a little awed by all they saw....but it was the eucalypt that dominated the writer's memories, rather than the dome, the sleep-out in the crow's nest, or the countless ingenious inventions - and she penned the above, in humble tribute.

Editor's Note: Taro, who was 21 when the century was a dot, had a cycling accident in his ninetieth year. He recovered from the subsequent fracture but the enforced inactivity had its effects. Lack of his usual strenuous exercise caused the symptoms usually associated with middle-age sloth. Middle-aged fears of ulcers drove Taro to seek further medical advice, surely the most intensive he has ever had. After swallowing the usual barium meals he was pronounced fit and well. Our Andean correspondent is threatening to write a book about Taro for those who perhaps haven't met him. My favourite tale of Taro's was of his telling a young mother her child must be musical because the child was fond of caw bark (Bach). I hate having to explain visual jokes.

The 1969 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

It was a gathering of modest size for the big business of the year, and got under weigh about 7.45: several apologies from those who customarily attend, but no new members to welcome, so it was straight into the February minutes. Arising from these, Dot Butler reported that funds available for the Kangaroo Valley land now amounted to almost \$2,500, including the \$1,550 from the Era funds. This would be sufficient for the purchase of one block, but two blocks (90 acres) would be secured if we could raise \$4,120. Gordon Redmond foreshadowed a later motion affecting this issue.

Correspondence (Inward) included a copy of the Constitution for the Australian Conservation Foundation: a report of further activity, including advance news of a meeting on 24th March, by the Colong Committee: from Maurice Berry, retiring as a Trustee, and suggesting younger appointees; from Ken Ellis for non-active membership and from Christa Younger seeking transfer back to "active". Finally from Ramon U'Brien on the subject of new clubrooms. This, said the State Planning Authority (regarding the re-development of the Quay area) was a City Council project and Council could not forecast a date. The Clubrooms sub-committee had looked at sundry premises, some being very expensive: one possibility was the rooms of the Irish National Association near Central Railway which were fairly cheap, but described as "functional". The opinion expressed was that most members would prefer to keep the present Clubrooms but it was suggested we ask the Nurses' Association to let us know as soon as any advice of demolition was received.

Correspondence (outward) included a letter of appreciation sent to Brian Harvey who had supplied the Archivist with copies of some walks programmes missing from the Club's records.

At this stage a suspension of standing orders was carried to allow election of Club officers to take place during the transaction of other business. Scrutineers were appointed and Edna Gentle took up her customary post as "writer". Oddly enough, the elections (list of officers elsewhere in this issue) went straight through before any other business arose, as there was a complete absence of competition. Indeed trouble was found in filling the cast, even to the point where the position of President was left open till later in the meeting.

Quite late in the meeting, with electioneering at an end, the Annual Report was adopted, followed by the Annual Financial Statement. This was promptly followed by the

Annual Argument (subscriptions up, down or same). The retiring Treasurer moved for an increase of 50c in all categories of membership, the main reasoning being that the magazine account, on the basis of \$1.50 per subscription, showed a small deficit, though funds in general were on the right side of the ledger.

This produced lengthy debate, in which it was argued that if the overall result was satisfactory, a small loss on magazine operations did not warrant a general increase: furthermore it was reported that a considerable stock of covers and stationery were on hand. Finally on an amendment, it was resolved that subscriptions remain at \$5.50 active member: \$7.50 marrieds: \$3.50 students, and \$1 entrance fee.

Owing to the lateness of the hour it was agreed that the routine reports be presented at the next general meeting, with the exception of the financial report for February which showed a trading balance of \$532.

In General Business, Gordon Redmond moved that \$1,000 of the Club's funds in Bonds be contributed to the purchase of the Kangaroo Valley land. Supporting this, Dot Butler said if we acquired the two blocks (90 acres) valued at about \$5,000 for a figure in the vicinity of \$4,100, we should have the option of obtaining further Crown land at a nominal figure in a few years. If subsequently it were desired to sell, or if the land were resumed in connection with later stages of the Kangaroo-Shoalhaven dam projects the Club would almost certainly gain financially.

one
Frank Ashdown and Claude Haynes were opposed/on the grounds that the land was not easily accessible for those without private transport and the other because it would dissipatethe Club's monetary resources. Neville Page endeavoured to put forward an idea that any money donated from the Club's general funds should be earmarked for return in the event of disposal of the land, after which the motion to donate \$1,000 was carried.

Time of occupation of the Clubroom had now expired so completion of the remaining business was adjourned to the date of the April General Meeting. Phil Butt voiced appreciation of Frank Rigby's term of office as President, and the things achieved, and we closed the record at 10.40 p.m. on the annual rallying cry "Let us Re-une".

LIST OF OFFICERS ETC.

President	Don Finch
Vice-Presidents	(1) Phil Butt (2) Jack Gentle
Secretary	Sheila Binns
Asst Secretary	To be appointed
Treasurer	Jim Vatiliotis
Walks Sec.	Dorothy Noble
Social Sec.	Marcia Shappert
Membership Sec.	Rolf Janssen
Conservation	Alex Colley (subject to his acceptance)
Committee	Ladies (1) Marion Lloyd (to be elected)
	Men (1) Wilf Hilder (2) Jim Calloway
Literary Editor	Bill Gillam
Mag. Bus. Manager	Bill Burke
Mag. Sales & Circ.	To be appointed
Federation Delegates	(1) Alan Round, (2) Barry Pacey (3) Don Read (4) to be appointed
Substitute Delegates	(1) Jim Calloway (2) Joan Rigby
Keeper Maps & Timetables	Doone Wyborn
Archivist	Joan Rigby
Equipment Hire	(1) Ramon U'Brien (2) Lawrence Quaken
S & R Contacts	(1) Elsie Bruggy (2) Heather White (both subject to their acceptance) (3) Paddy Pallin
Trustees	(1) Heather White (2) Gordon Redmond (3) Bill Burke
Solicitor	Colin Broad (Hon Member)
Auditor	Nan Bourke
Nature Conservation Council Delegates	(1) Phil Hall (2) Wilf Hilder
Projectionist	Bob Younger
Parks & Playgrounds Delegate	Margaret Child
Tracks & Access Delegate	Wilf Hilder



PADDY MADE

- 15 -

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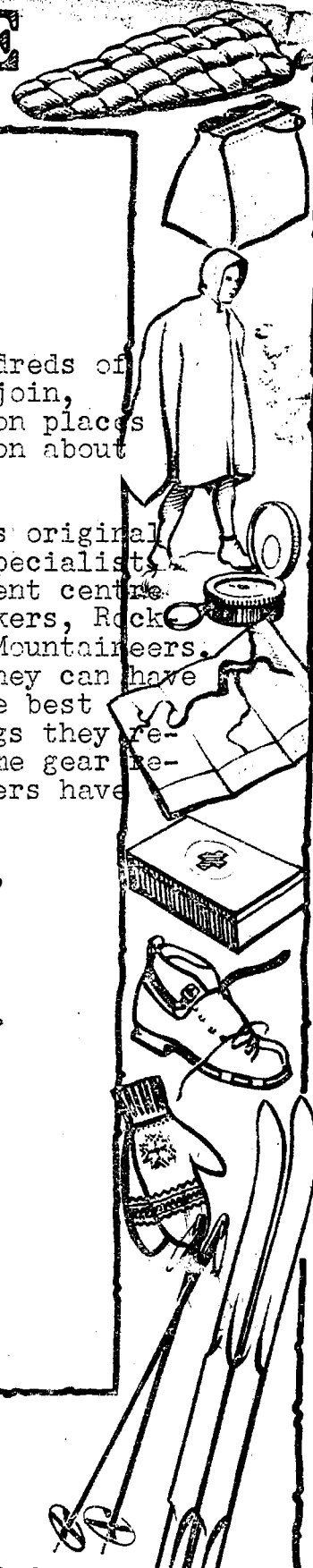
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IMPRESSIONS.

An Outsider.

Accepting an invitation to "come along" with the Sydney Bushwalkers Club for one of their guided weekend package-tours, brought me no closer to discovering whether or not kangaroos do exist in Australia outside Toronga Park. It did, however, reveal to a pair of (I admit) incredulous and bigotted British eyes, that Australia does have a natural beauty of its own which - unaided by any supposed ancestral connections between it and Regent's Park (London) (you never know what we're going to try and claim next) - stands a par with the splendour of any other natural science wonder of the world. Fortunately it is still to be found in some of the less accessible areas of the country.

This latter qualification, however, which would no doubt be described by several of the guests to this tour as "the understatement of the year", needs radical readjustment, for the terrain surrounding our particular beauty spot could be qualified in terms of intensity no less than "hostile" and "formidable".

Call me "typical Pommie exaggerator" (probably), "unappreciative" (definitely not), or whatever else you will, but do remember the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

The object of our journey was initially to find the Cowmung, Cowmin, Cowmun, Cowmuk (?) river, and then to follow it along its granite section. This having been achieved, we were to return along an approved route to base.

The conducting of the first stage of our trip, however, proved to be the cause of some considerable embarrassment among the "apparently" more experienced, self-appointed leaders of the group. It will suffice to say that two full circles were completed within the first half hour.

Notwithstanding, we did eventually reach the river, after having split up into numerous smaller groups each being firmly assured that their's was the correct route. Ours was obviously a short cut, for despite the fact that the temperature was well over 90, and that the scrub was (in normal circumstances) impenetrable, we managed to down "the slope" (?) in about half an hour. Bleeding, battered, bruised and bootless we felt no inclination, however, to claim the discovery of a new route.

The struggle, I may now say, proved to be well worth the effort.

In the valley the river of pure crystalline water (apparently the only totally unpolluted river left in N.S.W.) carves its way through white blanchied rock weathering it into the most fantastic shapes; it cascades hundreds of feet into enormous bright blue lakes which have been literally scooped out of the granite by the water erosion, and here, with its mirror like surface, reflects the great granite boulders perched precariously high above on the valley ridge.

We travelled down stream for one and a half days covering most of the distance in the water with packs on our backs (there was, as you can well imagine, cause for much disconcertment in the evening among those members of the party who - unlike us - had not wrapped their sleeping bags in two plastic bags.)

Waterfalls naturally presented a problem since the valley sides, in most places, rose far too sheerly out of the water to enable us to climb around them. They were, generally, best traversed by means of the common phenomenon known as gravity:- a decidedly easy method during transit, but also rather painful on landing (our packs - still on our backs - had an awkward habit of trying to thrust violently upwards, whilst we were busily engaged in plunging to the deep - surfacing proved to be no problem). Those other cases where it would have been positively foolish to adopt the above-mentioned "easy-method", usually forced us, after much heated discussion, to become victims of dangling at the wrong end of an "abseil" rope.

None of the hazards, however, deserve a mention when compared with the slightest hint of "The Return".

At 2.30 p.m. on Sunday, having eaten the last of our provisions so as to lighten our packs, we turned from the river, and, on the assurance from the party guide that we would be back at our starting point in TWO hours, set off regretfully, but cheerfully, up and along the ridge shoulder.

At precisely 4.30 p.m., after many dry groans of fatigue, our guide tried to convince us that since it was nearly 4.30 we should very shortly be arriving back at the starting point, where he was sure we would welcome some form of refreshment.

At 5.30 p.m. after mumbling something about watches gaining time, and that if we didn't buck up we'd be walking in the dark, he rushed ahead in an obvious attempt to avoid the fury of a thousand (very dry) tongues. In this he was successful, at least until.....7.30 p.m. when by

the light of the moon he again mumbled. This time, however, his sense of guilt obviously forced him to stay and give us some form of explanation: "oh....I think ah.....we've um...." The rest of his utterance was, as was quite natural under the circumstances, obscured by the above mentioned fury. Nevertheless his explanation proved to be of some value in that it sparked off the latent integrity of some of the other more experienced members of the party who had, up to this point, left it all up to him. They surmised, believing in fact that our guide was correct in his initial judgment, that it should take two hours from the river back to camp, that the most intelligent thing to do would be to turn back exactly the way we had come!

After the fury of tongues being once more unleashed by the female members of the party, this is indeed exactly what we did.

One long hour later, after having stumbled through some of the thickest scrub, two of the women were violently sick! This, in face of the fact that we had been walking almost continuously for fifteen hours, was not surprising, and the seriousness of our predicament now became blatantly obvious even to the more high spirited members of the group. We resolved that it would be a far better idea to allow our guide and another bush hardened member to go on ahead, whilst we would stay put and wait hopefully.

Now to bring a dramatic tale to a rather undramatic close; within fifteen minutes a bounding "bush hardened member" is seen in the distance whose violent yells and screams are at first attributed to affects of the full moon. A rapid reassessment of his condition, however, (aided no doubt by the deciphering of some of his words "....found"they're there!) causes the same kind of jubilatory shouts and screams to erupt from the already exhausted members of our party and in another few minutes we are back at the starting point. In retrospect a truly enjoyable experience.

SKIING NEWS: It is only ten weeks, or thereabouts, to the start of the snow trips. With luck and early snow the first instructional should be the last weekend in May. The snow early in the season is usually very icy; last year we had the good fortune to have fresh powder on this base which would have been wonderful had it not then rained. Come and brave the elements. Your instructor is leading a walk to Splendour Rock May 2-3-4 to be fully fit. Come on this one too.

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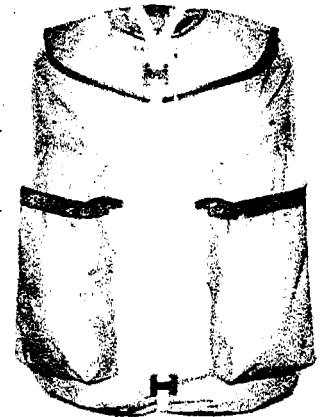
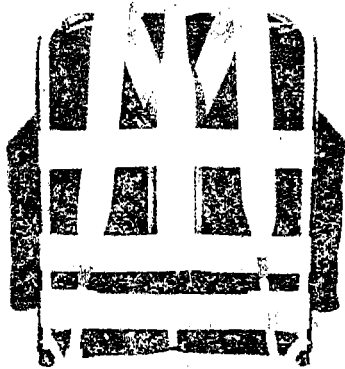
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SNOW



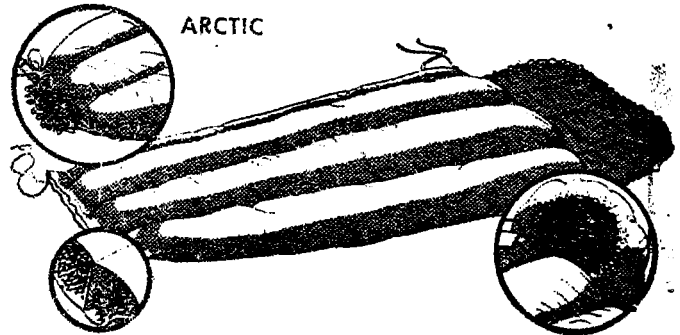
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