

1978 NOVEMBER

PAGES 1 and 2 Missing

Unlike fireflies they maintain their faint green glow continuously, oblivious of noise or light. This tunnel is some 400 metres in length, maintaining a steep down grade slope, and has a 780 metre radius curve. The tunnel now accommodates quite a healthy watercourse which is leaving the tunnel floor badly eroded and strewn with a clutter of debris and old sleepers. Access to the tunnel by motor vehicles has now been cut off by a huge washout about 2 km up track, and even access by scramble bikes would be extremely limited.

On passing through the blackness of No.2 tunnel we emerged into the beautiful and spectacular Penrose Gorge with its profusion of ferns, palms and other rain forest species. It was in this area that the more severe washaways had occurred from the recent heavy flooding in the area, making progress in a few places extremely difficult, despite the more level terrain through this section.

A few kilometres further on the Penrose Gorge opened out into the beautiful Wolgan Valley and the track once again sloped off to the maximum grade of 1 in 25 (great for walking down as long as one didn't think too much about the return trip).

We made our base camp near Newnes at the site of the old Constance Railway Depot and Workshops, the only remains being the inspection pits which are now almost completely filled with earth and a few scattered remnants of rolling stock. Up track a short way are the decaying remains of a couple of small wagons and a huge 32 ton capacity "Dreadnought" wagon.

The Constance Railway Depot and Workshops were built about 2 km upstream from Newnes as this was the only suitable site available for a workshop complex with turn-around and marshalling area for trains. Trains were simply turned around by utilizing a siding running off at right angles to the main line with access from both up hill and down hill. Evidence of this siding still remains with sleepers protruding through the undergrowth on a ballasted section which ends in a short blind cutting.

Deposits of kerosene shale or torbanite were known to exist in the Wolgan Valley as early as 1865, however mining on a large scale was considered to be impractical without some form of transportation capable of handling the expected gross tonnage estimated at 1000 tons per day. The only solution to this problem was to construct a railway line into the valley, and this project was undertaken during 1907 and 1908, the railway being completed in less than 13 months. The construction of the railway was considered to have been a major feat of engineering in its day.

The railway was initially used for the transportation of coal and coke, the latter being produced at the coke works at Newnes and transported to the Cobar Smelting Works.

The Newnes Coke Works comprised about 120 individual ovens arranged in a bank of 2 wide set back to back. Each oven was built to a beehive design and was about 3 metres in diameter and about 2.5 metres high with a domed roof. The front of the ovens had a small arched opening somewhat similar to that of an igloo. Inside the ovens, located in the centre

of the roof is a large filling or charging hole about 45 cm in diameter, a little lower in the roof and off centre is a smaller hole about 30 cm in diameter connected to a flue system. Around the walls at a height of about 1.8 metres are a small number of small vents connected to a cast iron pipe ducting system.

Coke is produced from soft coal by roasting or burning in the absence of air, the operation of the Newnes Coke Ovens would appear to have been quite a simple process. Firstly, a charge of heating coal would have been placed in the oven, residues on the walls indicate that this bed of coal would have been laid to a depth of 30-45 cm, this would then have been fired, the combustion gases being drawn off via the flue system. When the oven had been heated sufficiently the front opening and the flue would have been sealed and the charge of graded soft coking coal introduced via the filler hole, which would have then been immediately sealed. The coal gas produced would have been drawn off through the small vent holes in the oven wall and ducted to a distillation plant for the production of coal tar residues and by-products. After the coking operations had been completed the ovens would have been allowed to cool before emptying and the whole process repeated.

The Newnes Coke Works closed down in 1911 after being in operation for only three years, the major cause of this was the shut down of the Cobar Smelting Works.

The ruins of the coke works are in extremely poor condition today. The western end of the complex is in the best condition, with a few ovens still in a reasonable condition. The remainder of the complex is in varying stages of collapse, whilst much of the complex at the eastern end has disappeared under a tangle of rubble and undergrowth.

The production of oil from kerosene shale or torbanite at Newnes did not commence until about 1911 or 1912, although no doubt a reasonable amount of kerosene shale would have been produced in conjunction with general coal mining operations. This would have been either stockpiled or railed out, the higher quality shale possibly being exported and the lower grade being processed for oil, probably at the Hartley Vale shale oil refinery. Much of the shale oil refinery at Hartley Vale was transported to Newnes after its closure in 1911.

The Newnes Shale Oil Refinery came into production during 1912, and with the upgrading of the railway line beyond Newnes Railway Station, the Constance Railway Workshops and Depot were shifted to a more convenient site adjacent to the general works around 1914.

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#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER.

Please let the Assistant Secretary, Sheila Binns, have any changes of address or telephone numbers by the December General Meeting, for inclusion in next year's List of Members.

BOB YOUNGER'S TRIP TO NEWNES.

by Emma Duncan (aged 9).

The people who came were Bob Younger, Ian Debert, Frank, Evonne, David Cotton, Adrienne Shilling (who I remembered best because Dave Cotton said that she had more cents than anyone else) and the Duncans (4). We drove to Bell and waited there for the rest to arrive. When everyone had arrived we drove to a pine forest and camped. In the morning we drove along the road and went through a tunnel. From when we left camp we had been following an old train track. About a mile or so away from the tunnel we stopped the cars and started walking. First of all we came to a small washaway, then we came to an enormous washaway. A fair way from the washaway we came to a glow-worm tunnel. The tunnel was dark and we had to avoid puddles. Where it was darkest we saw lots of glow-worms. At the other end of the tunnel there was a fern forest.

After we had walked through the fern forest we came to a washaway that we had to climb up. Then we walked to Wolgan Valley and stopped for a while. We looked down on the fields. There were lots of cows. Then we came to a few more washaways. Mum, Michael and I walked on ahead and soon saw the others. They had gone to look at a coal mine. We walked on until we came to where we would camp. After lunch we went to Newnes. There were some ruins but it began to get dark so we went back.

After breakfast next morning our family started walking back (before everyone else, who went to look at the ruins). A few hours after lunch the others caught up with us. When we had reached the place where we had left the cars we found that the tyre was flat and while Dad fixed it David Cotton made some tea and I scalded my foot. (But it is better now.) There were ten big washaways altogether.

\* \* \* \* \*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR.MELBOURNE WOMEN'S WALKING CLUB.

Dear ???

Would you be good enough to send on the enclosed letter to your member, Owen Marks, if (or when) he is back in Australia. I have left it open so that you can know just what is passing through your hands.

In your May issue you had an article by Owen Marks on his trip to Simla; I found this very interesting and photo-copied it; the copies have gone to several people and it has occurred to me that I may have breached a copyright. If so, my apologies to Owen Marks as writer and to The Sydney Bushwalker as publisher.

Incidentally, one of the things I will miss when I opt out as Sec, is seeing your Newsletter - it is one of the most interesting ones we get.

With best, wishes, Yours sincerely, Judith Wiseman.

O B I T U A R Y

by Jess Martin.

It is with regret I write to inform members that, after some months of illness, Grace Jolly died on 2nd November, 1978.

Grace became a member well before the Second World War, and the many friends she made will remember how she enlivened the party on walks with her witty remarks, particularly when the going became difficult and tension mounted in a tricky situation, on trips in the Blue Mountains, the Pigeon House area and our first trip in the Wog Wog Creek area.

The men in her food party certainly appreciated the meals she cooked for them.

Grace was a good actress and took part in many of the sketches presented at concerts and entertainments at camp fires. She had a flair for comedy and the lines especially written for her were always imbued with her clever wit.

Some years ago Grace made her home at Wentworth Falls, and travelled to work at Homebush each day at the Metropolitan Meat Board; this restricted her participation in general Club activities. Club members were always welcome at Wentworth Falls and Grace sometimes joined small parties walking in her area.

When Grace left the Meat Board she sold her Wentworth Falls home and bought a house at Bowral, in which town her father and sisters were living when Grace first came to Sydney to work. At Bowral she had a lovely garden of native shrubs and flowers. Whilst living at Wentworth Falls Grace had started making bark flower pictures, for which she found a ready sale, and she continued this interest in Bowral.

Her many friends and I are sad we have lost a very good friend and a personality who will always be remembered.

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SLIDE COMPETITION

by Christine Austin.

The date is March 28, 1979. Please give me your slides (15-20 per person, maximum) two weeks beforehand, i.e. March 14th at the Annual General Meeting. This is imperative as they must be re-arranged by our judge. In case you didn't see the first advertisement, the judge is Henry Gold, a well-known wilderness photographer. Everyone please contribute as last time a competition was arranged it was a failure, due to lack of enthusiasm. As mentioned before, these evenings are great fun.

Don't forget the two sections are:-

- Landscape
- That Bushwalking Feeling (includes slides of people)

Good luck!

AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Dear Bushwalker,

I am appealing to you to join ACF in its efforts to protect Australia's countryside.

As a bushwalker, you know the value of the Australian bush, the need to get away from noise and traffic, the importance of places where one can experience natural beauty and solitude.

Many of Australia's most outstanding nature areas are now protected. This was not achieved by the kindness of governments, it was achieved because organisations such as the ACF brought to the attention of government the need to reserve areas for recreation.

We have had successes but there are many threats to remaining areas. Your support now will help us with our work for conservation.

Complete this membership form and return it to us with your cheque. A subscription to our colour magazine Habitat Australia will give you six issues a year of a conservation magazine with magnificent colour photographs. Let us know if you would like us to send you a sample copy.

Join us today for a better tomorrow!

Yours sincerely,

GEOFF MOSLEY.  
Director.

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To: ACF Membership Office,  
672B Glenferrie Road,  
HAWTHORN. VIC. 3122.

I/We apply for membership, pay the accompanying subscription and agree to be bound by the Constitution and regulations of the ACF.

Please tick:

( ) \$12	Ordinary Member	Signed .....
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( ) \$ 7	Habitat Australia subscriptn.	Name .....
( ) \$	Donation	Address .....
\$	Total herewith	.....

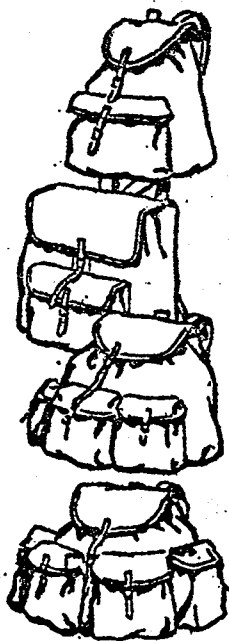
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Lightweight bushwalking and camping gear.



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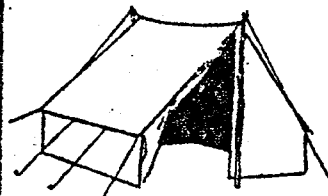
A single pocket, shaped rucksack. Suitable for over-night camping. Weight 1½lbs.

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Extra large bag with four external pockets and will carry about 40lbs of camp gear. Weight 2½lbs.



### 'A' TENTS

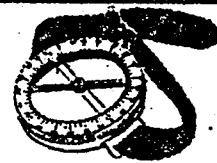
One, two or three man. From 2½ to 3½lbs. Choice of three cloths. Supplied with nylon cords and overlapped doors. No walls.



### WALL TENTS

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# Paddy's

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SWITZERLAND.

by Owen Marks.

Two facts face every traveller when contemplating a holiday in Switzerland - it is the most beautiful land on earth and unfortunately the dearest. Don't let the latter disturb you. With a bit of forewarned knowledge and a sense of fun, you too can get involved with the people, their village life and the Mountains, the Mountains and more Mountains.

Upon arrival in a big city, say Zurich (with its wonderful museum right at the railway station and airport bus terminal), buy an eight day TRAVEL PASS for \$42 approx. This magic pass entitles you to all the Government railway lines, and most of the private narrow gauge ones which go up into the mountains. Unfortunately it won't get you to the top of Jungfrau or other terribly expensive mountain eyries; but it covers all the steamers on the lakes and down the Rhine River. It works on some funiculars and cable cars that whisk you over valleys and awesome cliffs in 100-people gondolas, but if there is a charge, a discount system of up to 50% is applicable on some cable cars, otherwise 25% off. It's just incredible what you can do. The next thing to buy is a railway guide book. It has fares and timetables of every bus, train, cable car, ferry, funicular and even aeroplane schedules. Thus prepared you can go off and have a superb time. (Make sure you have bought all your food before arriving in Switzerland. We left Barcelona stocked like your corner shop, Barcelona being the cheapest city in Europe's cheapest country. Mum had her purse full of little plastic sealed bags of olives, and was always ready for a snack.)

We left Zurich amidst the most perfect weather and made our way to the top of the St.Gothards Pass, via a little cog train that seemed to go underground more than in the open, from the end of the tunnel that the main line goes through to Lake Como. "Sorry, the train line to Brig" (Zermatt's nearest main station) "is closed by snow avalanches." The date was 15th June, midsummer. I didn't believe him, railway officials know nothing as usual, how could it be so? Alas, it was true. What to do? "Why, back to the St.Gothard Tunnel and head for Lugano, change into a mountain tram for Dommodossala and under the Simplon Tunnel and lo, you will be in Brig. A long way round but the motor roads are all closed too; it will not cost you a cent. You have a rail pass." What a clever railway official, and we did what he suggested. Every train connects with every connection and there is a waiting time of 50 seconds at the most. The main train started at the northern end of the St. Gothard Tunnel and soon we were in the Italian-speaking part and heading for Locarno. The scenery was obscured by the rain at this point. A MAXIM. IF IT'S RAINING IN THE SOUTH IT'S FINE IN THE NORTH AND VICE VERA.

"What's the point in hanging around Lake Maggiore in the rain," said my mother, and we were off via a little tram through the suburbs and along the Centovalli River and were soon climbing into the Alps again with the most perfect scenery imaginable. I'll describe it now while it is all fresh. It was lovely. How else can you describe picture postcards or scenes from calendars. No matter where the eye glanced it was to see



green valleys, clean railway stations, picture-book houses, ruined stone castles, contented cows, fast flowing streams, trees and more green fields. Enough. If you can't imagine Switzerland there is no hope for you.

We arrived at Dommodossala and suddenly realized we were in Italy. Yes, the Swiss Pass works in this part of Italy. It is because a finger of an Italian valley juts into it, and the only transport available is Italian. (I forgot to mention that this pass works on buses as well and if you are in St. Moritz you can travel to Locarno via Italy too.) Night was going to strike us down so we decided to stay overnight in Italy. A nice little Pensione in the old part of the town was most comfortable for \$5 a double. From memory Cavour was a guest many years ago. It must have been the original bed, as I finished up sleeping on the floor. Next morning I paid the owner's son who was in charge of the bar (he was 11 or 12 - you know you are in Italy).

In one hour's time we were in Brig having passed through the Simplon Tunnel. We had one minute to catch a train, but I realized it was a tram that started outside in the square. I'd have to run back for Mum who was struggling with her Qantas bag. I had the rucksack on. (We had left all our gear at the airport locker and were travelling in what we stood in and a change of underwear, and Mum carried the food.) As we sat down the tram moved off heading for Zermatt. A little private tram that climbs up very slowly and then would put down its middle wheel and cog us up little steep pinches and then proceed to Zermatt. Here on this tram in a crowded compartment occurred the Most Embarrassing Moment of my life. More embarrassing than when I had rapid galloping diarrhoea whilst having an interview with the Sultan of Jogjakarta and the interpreter refused to ask him where the toilet was. What an ending that story had! I had merely told Mum we were heading for Zermatt and neglected to mention what was there. The carriage had a few photographs and one was of a mountain. My mother in a loud voice to show off her knowledge said "I recognize that mountain from my trip to Disneyland!!" It was the Matterhorn. The shame overwhelmed me.

We arrived at Zermatt to find the mountain shrouded by fog and after a walk around the town headed for the foothills, and the same thought passes through the minds of all the tourists, whether to invest in a trip up in a cable car to see nothing. Luckily we decided not to, because we heard later that nothing was seen for three days, and it was mid afternoon, and "Where shall we go?" Another MAXIM: WHEN RAINING HEAD FOR THE TOWNS AND WHEN FINE HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS.

We caught the mountain train back to Brig and the first express to Berne. Scenery but rain all the way. Berne is a wonderful spot to buy your Patek Philippe or Gerrard Perregaux but useless in buying bread and cheese. There was absolutely nowhere to stay, as everything was booked up. "Try the Youth Hostel". Another hint for the Swiss traveller. Disregard the warnings of age. Everyone knows that nobody over the age of 25 is allowed in Youth Hostels in Switzerland. Yes, they could take us being out of season (hotels are in season). That was how my mother finished up in a dormitory with American Hitch Hikers. The open showers

she refused to use. Still, her first Youth Hostel in Europe, and listening to the young kids tell of their hitching adventures was quite an interesting experience for her.

Next day more rain but a chance of it clearing, so we caught a train to Thun on Thunsee and the ferry boat that had five people instead of the usual 300. It is so expensive that tourists have to weigh the weather with the scenery otherwise it's a sheer waste of money. With a Travel Pass you can just catch everything. To sit in a clean Swiss ferry boat with our kettle boiling (thanks to Bob and Christa Younger, who had given us a little 3" immerser and we could plug it into various unexpected places), sipping coffee and gazing out across the placid swan-filled waters with Southern Obernese Alps to the south, slightly covered in mist is Paradise indeed.

Soon we were coming into Interlaken and the weather clearing. I had a plan to make for Murren that night because I found out that another youth hostel was nearby where you could do your own cooking. What an exciting trip it was. The narrow gauge train stops at Lauterbrunnen. To the right was a sheer wall going up into the mist which had appeared miraculously, but the locals said it was going to get very bad. Up the wall was a funicular going up into the clouds and soon we were in a white-out. "Craziness," said Mum "We'll see nothing and die of cold." We arrived at Grutschalp with the snow falling (so hard to believe that it was not mid-winter!) We were only 4500 ft up and where were we? All the passengers were running across the 4" deep path of snow onto a tram that would run along the cliff wall to Murren. Suddenly the white-out lifted, and there, on our left, was the view which we were assured was dear to the hearts of all Swiss. The entire Alps were snow covered from 9000 ft down to 4000 ft, Jungfrau in the centre with the Eiger and the Black Monk, which I had never heard of (but that means nothing). On either side were peaks and peaks streaked with black which were exposed rocky precipices. Absolutely fantastic that it is pointless for me to describe.

At Murren the tram came to a terminus and as the hotels were too fantastic to even contemplate asking the price, we walked through the village of ninety or so houses with a few little shops that sell chocolates and a small bank that had (would you believe) the stock exchange markets of London, New York and Zurich listed in the window. Nothing should amaze you here in Switzerland. At the end of the village was Station No.2 of Europe's longest cableway. Our free pass took us down to Gimmelwald where we charged into the youth hostel without any to do. The old lady in charge asked us into her private house next door, and made us very welcome. She insisted that my mother have an afternoon's sleep in the lounge room, but my mother decided not to. The reason was the smell, because the floor boards were rather old and you could peek into the stables below, and the aroma of urine and other matter was permeating the sitting room. A little village shop sold frankfurters that would have sent Shylock reeling into the Grand Canal with shock, and with a few onions, had a pleasant meal home cooked.

That night it snowed 14" (the 17th June) and at dawn we had the best view I have ever seen. Here I decided to give myself a birthday

present as I had forgotten it during my trip in Italy. (I must have had something else on my mind on the day because I was ringing up from Rome to a friend in Sydney and she told me it was my birthday.) I decided to go up the cable car all the way to the top and pay from stop 3 where the free trip petered out. Thirty minutes of silently surveying snow-clad farmlets, trees, scree slopes, and finally over rocks and snow on to the permanently snowbound Schilthorn and its Revolving Restaurant. And for only \$6 you can eat bread, butter, jam and coffee and see the sun shining over the world whilst eating breakfast. Mt. Blanc could be seen way behind, and in front the Eiger, Jungfrau etc. The terrace was covered in knee deep snow and the sky a deep blue.

I arrived back at the youth hostel for lunch amidst the melting of snow and went for a walk around Gimmelwald with plastic bags tied over my shoes. Not a single soul was to be seen. Waterfalls were cascading from every cliff and as we left by cable car our gondola went nearly 1600 ft over a sheer cliff and swayed in the wind until the green valley was reached. A post bus met us and we were soon back at Interlaken.

Suddenly a train appeared labeled Grindewald and without thinking we hurried aboard, as it was a name we had both heard and from my mountain eyrie I had seen approximately where it lay. The little train wound up to the valley under the Jungfrau Glacier amidst awe-inspiring scenery. Just to sit outside the railway station and do nothing but feast your eyes on such scenery is enough and is all one can hope for, before the weather broke. A brass band was playing Rossini, and I bought a chocolate to help the economy.

The sun was now setting and where to sleep? Back on the main line at Spiez the problem solved itself . . . . . The next train would take us back under the Simplon Tunnel to Italy and Domodossola, and because of daylight saving would arrive there the same time we started. Our cheap pensione greeted us like old friends and we were given the same room. We stocked up with fruit, food and wine and had a terrific meal and thus ended our fourth day in Switzerland, two nights being spent in Italy. The youth hostels had cost us double what we were charged for a hotel in this lovely part of Italy.

If the weather held, tomorrow would see us taking the toy train from the other end of the Simplon Tunnel and over the St. Gothard to the St. Moritz part of the country where 20 years previously I had a summer job of bringing cows down from their summer pasture and where I always wanted to return. No sleeping pills needed and SO TO BED.

Here endeth Part One.

\* \* \* \* \*

PLEASE NOTE -

Jess Martin, Hon.Member, has a new telephone number - 399,3457.

The GONG as been found - put away carefully with the coffee cups!

BOOK REVIEW

by Alastair Battye.

"BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT - MAKING AND USING IT", by G. R. BIRCH.

Blandford Press. Price \$6.50.

This small book describes how to make walking equipment such as tents, a sleeping bag, a pack, an anorak, and gives some general hints on 'backpacking'. The book is published in England and is obviously aimed at English hikers. Its value to Australian bushwalkers appears limited, for if the general hints were accepted one would carry, in addition to the usual walking gear, scissors, electric razor, li-lo and plastic foam mat, wash basin, knife, water filter and purifier, a telescope (to see distant signposts believe it or not) and so on. A description is however given of how to construct a pack to carry all this stuff. The pack idea is ingenuous as the pack frame is formed of the tent poles (for the tent which is also described), plus a lot of leather strapping and fibreglass framing. The whole thing does appear somewhat heavy, but then it has much to carry.

Apart from the above, which is really a bit unusual for Australian conditions, the impression obtained from the descriptions of home manufacture of tents and sleeping bags is that if one has the wit to tackle such jobs one would also have the wit to sort out the simple geometry of the basic measurements and cutting needed. Where one may really run into trouble in such exercises is in the detail work, how to organise and sew the seams and other points. The book won't help you here, it ignores these points.

The clothing section suggests how to make up a rainjacket, shorts and trousers, but a study of the rather vague instructions and a look at the photos of the finished products gives the impression that for the Australian bush, buying a kiwi oilskin and a pair of stubbies would be better, cheaper and far less trouble.

To sum up, a book with the right idea but clumsily executed. It may have an appeal to some with an idea of beating Paddy at his own game, but with such a guide Paddy would surely win.

A.C.B.

Book copy kindly supplied for review by ANZ Book Co. Pty. Ltd.

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S.B.W. DINERS OUT

The third Wednesday dinners before club meetings will not be held in December or January. We will have the next dinner on the third Wednesday in February.

PETER MILLER, Convenor.

# **MOUNTAIN** PTY **EQUIPMENT** LTD

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We stock some of the world's leading brands. We specialize in top quality Bushwalking and Mountaineering gear.

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THE OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING.

by Barry Wallace.

The meeting began without apology at about 8.30 pm, with Fazeley in the chair and no brass gong or new members.

The minutes were read and accepted as a true and correct record. Incoming correspondence included a Federation letter re the Colo Fund, and a questionnaire on wilderness use from the same source. There was also a letter of resignation from Colin and Jan Todd. The only Outgoing correspondence was a letter to Federation about a letter from Federation about a letter to Federation about a letter from Federation about the "Walk in the Wilderness" scheme.

The Treasurer's report indicated a starting balance of \$1414.19 - Income of \$576.91, Expenditure of \$372.95, to give a closing balance of \$1618.15.

Federation report indicated that there will be a display of old bushwalking photographs at the next F.B.W. Re-union which will be held on 31 March/1 April (!) in Dahrug National Park. There are still some problems with S. & R. and the requirement for insurance cover for searchers. Federation has produced draft policies on wilderness use, major trails, and use of vehicles in national parks. The writs taken out against Federation over mining application in the Ettrema area have lapsed but the exercise has cost F.B.W. about \$1,000.00. There are reports that Monolith Valley has recently been subjected to aerial fire-bombing for a controlled burn (I use the terms loosely). You may remember that this is an area where Federation agreed to a moratorium on camping to permit regeneration.

The first walk in the Walks Report was led by Peter Miller who had 4 bods out on his Grose Valley weekend trip on the 15,16,17th September. On the same weekend, Ian Debert led 8 prospectives and 4 members on a slightly unusual route from Kedumba Creek to Katoomba via the other side of Mt. Solitary. They were compensated in some measure by catching the late-late ride on the scenic railway. There was no indication as to whether Vic Lewin's trip that weekend went.

On the weekend of 22,24 Sept. Don Finch led a party of 7 on a rather scrubby ramble in the North Budawang. The Coolana working bee that weekend attracted 18 bods.

The following long weekend saw James V. lead an unspecified number of persons on Peter Miller's walk (with some minor alterations) in the Kanangra area. Vic Lewin had 11 people on his North Budawang trip and Brian Hart led 6 members and a prospective on a modified version of his Turon River trip. Hans Beck reported 11 members, 9 prospectives and one visitor on his Blue Labyrinth day walk, but there is some confusion as to the day on which it all happened. David Rostron's October 6,7,8 trip did not start, but Gordon Lee had 12 people on his Grose Valley day walk on the 8th to conclude the walks report.

General Business brought forth no response, so after a few words about apparently widespread fire-bombing in the Budawangs, and the announcements, Fazeley closed the meeting with her famous impression "Kruschev at the U.N." by banging the table with her left shoe. The fashion editor will no doubt provide a fuller description of the shoe elsewhere in the magazine. Sufficient, I think, to note that the clock stood at 9.10 pm, and that the shoe was free of feet at the time.

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#### ESCAPE FROM ARIDITY.

by J.A. and R. DULHUNTY.  
(Department of Geology and  
Geophysics, Sydney University)

During 1973-74 and -75, 90% of the Australian continent experienced abnormally high rainfall. When expressed as percentages of the mean, the three year averages for abnormalities in rainfall districts receiving more than normal, varied from +3% to +133%. In the remaining 2% of the continent, which received less than normal, average abnormalities varied from only -2% to -6%. So abnormal rainfall far exceeded subnormal, in both area and extent, and farmers and graziers, as well as vegetation and wildlife, enjoyed a bonanza of good seasons.

An intriguing feature of the three year "wet" was that the greatest average abnormalities, all over +90%, occurred in the most arid areas of the continent, where rainfalls are normally lowest, from Tennant Creek and Alice Springs to Oodnadatta, Lake Eyre and Broken Hill. When rainfall abnormalities for these Central Australian districts are plotted against years for 1913 to 1977, the three year **bonanza** period stands out as a unique maximum.

In the Barkly region, across the north-east of the Lake Eyre internal drainage basin, the annual mean of 420 mm increased by 90% over the three year period, sending enormous quantities of flood water south through the Channel Country into the already saturated arid interior, filling Lake Eyre and other terminal lakes and low lying areas to the greatest depths for some 500 years. There were phenomenal increases in plant growth and insect activity, in aquatic life including fish and algae, and water fowl of all kinds appeared in ever increasing numbers. Ducks, small water birds, pelicans, cormorants and seagulls bred locally until countless thousands filled the skies, and total population almost certainly exceeded any known during white man's history of this country.

The following two years were very dry with annual rainfalls generally less than normal. By mid 1977 the excess waters of Central Australia had either dried up or become very saline. Fish had mostly died and little aquatic life remained in Lake Eyre by then four times as saline as the sea. Duck and small water birds had already left. Some pelicans and cormorants had departed, but large numbers remained and it seemed inevitable that

they must surely perish, as they appeared to have stayed too long, and would be too weak to fly long distances to escape when the water became brine and dried up. Bird lovers hearing of the impending tragedy were deeply concerned, especially about the pelicans. Some sent frozen fish to places where occasional birds had landed on dams and seemed too weak to fly on. Others asked could anything be done to save the thousands still at the lake, but the answer was "No". By May 1978 the pelicans and cormorants were believed to be doomed victims of survival of the fittest. Eventually the lake became some five times as salt as the sea, and virtually no food remained. Suddenly, as if by some miracle or guiding hand of instinct, all the large birds and most of the seagulls somehow mustered sufficient energy to take off and flew away, evidently in all directions. Then came reports of increased numbers of pelicans at many places along the coasts of Australia and islands to the north, even as far away as Indonesia where pelicans, unknown birds to the local inhabitants, had suddenly appeared. They arrived in Sydney, settled down on lakes in Centennial Park, and in Sydney Harbour, the Hawkesbury and Brisbane Water, where they are catching and eating sea fish. Their Australian ancestors normally lived on inland waters and freshwater fish, but the descendants who stayed at Lake Eyre till the water was five times as salt as the sea, are no doubt finding sea-water and its fish quite refreshing.

Now, only occasional dead birds can be found along the shores of Lake Eyre, no more than would be expected through normal death rate of the thousands of birds that lived there for three years. So the pelicans and other birds appear to have escaped the ruthlessness of Nature's laws of survival of the fittest during return to aridity.

The water is now saturated brine, some ten times the salinity of the sea, and the only water birds left are occasional seagulls who no longer sit or swim on the brine, but stalk along the beaches eating salted insects blown ashore.

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#### THE CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY.

by Christine Austin  
Social Secretary.

The Christmas Party will be held in the Clubroom, and the Club will provide the drinks. The date - 20th DECEMBER.

Contacts for this year's party are Fazeley Read (Ph. 909,3671) and Marcia Shappert (Ph. 30,2028). They will be organising it, as I won't be in Sydney. If you can assist them at 7.15 on the night, it would be appreciated.

Don't forget to bring a plate of party food and a GLASS.

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SUMMER WALKS PROGRAMME & SOCIAL PROGRAMME - DECEMBER 1978, JAN. & FEB. 1979

CLUB ROOMS: 14 Atchison St., St. Leonards (Wireless Institute Building)  
Open Wednesday evenings from 7.30 p.m.

POSTAL ADDRESS: Box 4476 G.P.O. Sydney 2001.

ENQUIRIES REGARDING THE CLUB: Mrs. Marcia Shappert - Tel. 30-2028.

DECEMBER

- 1,2,3 KANANGRA AREA ABSEILING: Kanangra - Kalang Falls - Thurat Spires - Kanangra - Wahlahah Canyon - Kanangra. Map: Kanangra.  
The first of many good abseiling weekends on this programme. Spectacular Kanangra Deep area and, of course, be prepared for wet descents and steep ascents.  
LEADER: GORDON LEE 398 2145 (B) Ring between 7.00-3.30.
- Sunday 3 WEST HEAD: The Basin, America Bay, West Head Road (Swimming) 10 km EASY  
Map: Hawkesbury.  
A very pleasant summer day walk offering scenic coastal views in Sydney's Kuringai Chase LEADER: IAN DEBERT 6490281 (B) Ring between 12.00 & 12.30
- 8,9,10 BLACK RANGE - Cronje Buttress - Jenolan River - Cox R - Slaughter House Ridge  
35 km MEDIUM. Map: Jenolan  
An interesting two day test walk in the beautiful Cox/Jenolan Rivers area.  
Good ridge & river walking and excellent campsite assured. LEADER: BRIAN HART 723447, 721262 (B).
- 8,9,10 DANAE BROOK ABSEILING: Kanangra - Danae Brook - Kanangra Ck - Kanangra. 14 km  
WET and some vertical. Map: Kanangra One of the most popular and spectacular abseiling trips  
LEADER: DAVID ROSTRON 4517943
- Sunday 10 ROYAL NATIONAL PARK: Lilyvale - Burning Palms - Otford 12 km EASY.  
Swimming optional. An excellent Sunday summer walk, beautiful coastal and bush scenery. Map: Otford 1.25000 LEADER: ROY BRAITHWAITE 445211  
Train: 8.45 (E)
- Sunday 17 ROYAL NATIONAL PARK: Lilyvale - Palm Jungle - Burning Palms - Garrawarra Farm - Otford 13 km EASY Map: Otford 1.25000. As the previous Sunday walk, all track walking and swimming (surfing) LEADER: KATH BROWN 812675 Train: 8.46 (c)
- Sunday 17 ABSEILING PRACTICE: Grand Canyon Map: Katoomba 1.25000 A rare opportunity to learn or practice abseiling. Although the drops are not too high safety ropes could be supplied to the uninitiated LEADER: TONY MARSHALL 482285 (H)
- Sunday 24 BUNDEENA - Deer Pool - Marley Beach - Coastal track - Bundeena 11km EASY  
MAP: Port Hacking 1.25000 Another good summer day walk with lots of swimming and scenic coastal views LEADER: JIM BROWN 812675 Train: 8.50(E) Tickets to Cronulla.
- 26,27,28, SNOWY MTS CLASSIC: 1. Guthega - White's River - Gungahlin - Brassys - Mawsons -  
29,30,31 & Jugangal - Valentine Falls - White River 11. Rolling Grounds - Guthega Pondage -  
Jan 1,2 Spencer's Ck - Ramshead - Kosciusko - Twynam - Sentinel - Watson's Crag -  
Mt. Tate - Rolling Grounds - White's River - Guthega MEDIUM Maps: S.M.A.,  
Tooma, Indi, Geehi Above routes flexible - also dates. Excellent open  
high altitude walking in the Main Range. LEADER: GORDON LEE 3982145 (B) 7.00 a.m.  
to 3.30 p.m.
- Sunday 31 WATERFALL - Kangaroo Ck - Waterfall 6km EASY Map: Port Hacking Tourist. An easy relaxing day walk (with swimming) to build up energy for the New Year.  
LEADER: MERYL WATMAN 570 1831 (H) Train: 8.46 (C).

KEEP THE BUSH CLEAN AND GREEN - PUT YOUR FIRE OUT

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