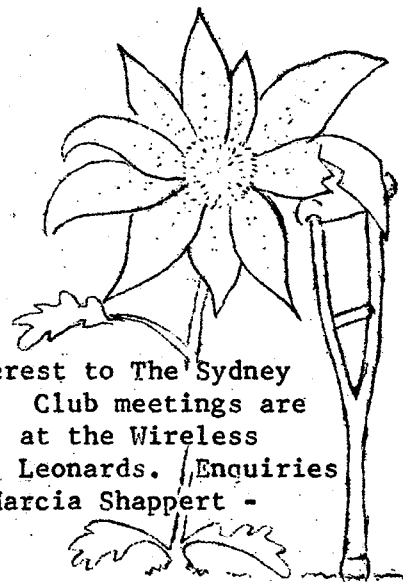


THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER



A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bushwalkers, Box 4476, G.P.O. Sydney, 2001. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening from 7.30 p.m. at the Wireless Institute building, 14 Atchison Street, St. Leonards. Enquiries concerning the Club should be referred to Marcia Shappert - Tel. 30 2028.

EDITOR: Helen Gray, 209 Malton Road, Epping 2121
Tel. 86 6263

BUSINESS MANAGER: Bill Burke, 3 Coral Tree Drive, Carlingford 2118.
Tel. 871 1207

TYPIST: Kath Brown

DUPLICATOR OPERATOR: Bob Duncan, Tel. 869 2691

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AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE
(OR BEATING THE HEAT)

by Jim Brown.

More than twenty years ago, and before Burragarang was flooded by Warragarba Dam, I walked one summer's night by an almost full moon on quiet bush roads along the floor of the valley. Something of the magic of the shining river; the sleeping mountains brooding in the calm, warm air; the scents of the bush and the sounds of the birds and insects stayed with me as a nostalgic memory.

Then almost five years back, returning from a summer trip into the Blue Breaks, I found a delicate mauve-colored Melaleuca flower growing on a fine-leaved shrub on Big Stringybark Range between Butcher's Creek and the road along Scotts Main Range. The film in the camera was finished, so I couldn't record it, and I've not since seen it growing in any other place.

The two ideas of walking again by the summer full moon, and capturing my mauve "bottle brush" on Scotts Main coalesced into a single project, and I pre-empted well in advance the mid-week days of January 9-12, which led up to the January full moon. The plan was:- Kanangra, the Gingra Range by daylight, a long spell on the Kowmung, a moonlit walk on the Cedar Road, a visit to Butcher's Creek, return by night to the Kowmung, then a daylight exit up Gingra Creek and Craft's Ridge back to Kanangra.

By Monday, January 8th, the auguries were not good. We'd had three hot days, and the most optimistic TV weather reporters were talking hopefully but vaguely about a cool change - "possibly by Wednesday". My own forecast was based on our cat washing its ears and the colour of the milkman's shirt, and proved even more precise - infernally hot. I began to think how to beat the heat, and concluded that there would be a lot to support walking by night whenever it seemed feasible.

By the time I'd driven through Blackheath about 8.0 o'clock on the Tuesday morning I could feel the burn of the sun through my shirt on the back of my right shoulder. Before long I had unbuttoned my shirt down the front, and opened the front angle window, allowing a blast of hot, eucalyptus-scented air to dry my face and neck. On arrival at Kanangra at 9.50, it was blowing from the north-west and raising dust eddies on the road. The distance was heat-hazed. Cicadas blared frenetically from every tree. The sky was cloudless.

Convinced now that my prediction based on the cat and the milkman was well founded, I went about changing some of the clothing and food in my pack, replacing long trousers with a sleeping sheet, and tossing out some tucker which needed cooking in favour of a tin of beef. At 10.20 I was away, and by dint of going as slowly as possible on the few short rising grades, I managed to take until 11.30 to cross the plateau and reach the Coal Seam Cave with its water supply - a good spot for shade and an early lunch.

The shade was very welcome. Less welcome was the discovery that

the blue-painted oil drum which now forms the water catchment was less than one-third full, and there was no drip into it - ten days previously it had been $\frac{3}{4}$ full, and I couldn't help wondering if some New Year weekend visitors had been stupidly prodigal with the meagre supply. Another unwelcome aspect was the flies: normally they are loath to go into dark and shady spots, but now the whole interior of the overhang was droning with a massive population of all kinds of bush flies. I wonder if, at about 35°C they too seek shelter from the bite of the sun?

Feeling rather a heel to deplete the water even further, I filled a plastic flask, and used the half-billy that I'd emptied out of it to steep shirt and shorts and then put them on wet. When I left at 12.20 pm, I estimated about 4 hours down the ridge to the Kowmung. It should take less, of course, but I knew that the great danger was an excessive increase in body heat leading to dehydration. In that fierce sun one sweated profusely, but the strong dry wind mopped up the moisture, and one wouldn't appreciate how quickly the body was losing fluid. My only answer was to crawl along on the few humps where it was necessary to go uphill, pausing under almost every shady tree. On the predominantly falling gradients I managed to maintain a fairly steady but very conservative and economical pace. Within 30 minutes of leaving the Coal Seam my clothes had dried out and after an hour the water in the flask was unpalatably warm.

From about 3.30 pm the heat of the day eased a little, and the longer tree shadows gave more shelter from the sun, but at these lower elevations the wind was often lost and the improvement was less marked than I'd hoped. It took just under 5 hours to come to the Kowmung and over the last hour I could feel the effects of dehydration and stopped briefly at intervals of about 15 minutes, even on this steadily falling section of the ridge, wherever there was a good blast of wind. At the junction of Gingra Creek with the Kowmung I halted only long enough to drop the pack and take off my watch, and then walked into the river up to my neck, clothing and all. The flies, which had become more and more pestilential over the last hour, rose in an agitated buzzing swarm and tried to concentrate on the small area of me that wasn't submerged.

I don't know how hot it was that evening. I do know that three times between 5.15 and 8.15 pm, whilst I rested on the mainly shadowed west bank of the Kowmung and cooked a meal, I walked into the river wearing shirt and shorts, and the clothing dried off on me within an hour each time. The sun had set behind Ti Willa when I started off on the first "moonlit" stage with the ascent up the Cedar Road on to Scott's Main Range. The road rises 1200 ft in about 2 miles, but I was pleased to find that, in the absence of the direct beat of the sun, and provided I was satisfied to plod along quietly, I was not unduly hot, sweaty, thirsty or uncomfortable.

A large and waxing moon lit my way from the top of the hill, past the site of Bran Jan House and north along the Cedar Road. It didn't give enough light to let me see clearly some dark-coloured birds about the size of a pigeon which seemed content to hop or flap along the road

just ahead of me. It did light up the paler waistcoats of the numerous kangaroos and wallabies which stood to attention at the roadside until I was within a few yards. And it did give enough light to see vaguely the seven or eight horses which galloped off up the trail in a haze of dust at my approach. And all the while the hot night air shrilled to the cicadas. In fact they kept up their courting song all that night and all the next day without a second's pause. The flies turned in about 9.0 pm.

About 10.45 I came to New Yards Ridge where a church recreational club has a permanent encampment, consisting of a chapel, two huts and the framework of another. There was tank water there, just as hot as the water I'd carried from the Kowmung in my flask, but it provided a good reason to stop and sleep under the stars, with my tent as part of the underbody, and lying naked in just the sleeping sheet. The air was scented with the aromatic smell of eucalyptus trees in the heat.

Let me describe Wednesday as a "lay-day". I got away in the first glimmers of light and it was evident it would be a real broiler. It did almost reach 40°C in Sydney that day - probably it was 42° or 43° on Butcher's Creek where I arrived about 6.45 am and spent practically all the daylight hours moving from one patch of shade to another and soaking myself in the stream at intervals of 40 to 45 minutes. Mostly I wore shirt and shorts for the dunkings because I then stayed damp and cooler for most of the next half hour. For lunch I opened the can of meat and found the jelly content was almost liquid. My butter had been in a molten condition for over 24 hours.

It was a tedious day, and the problem of extricating myself occupied some of my time. Eventually I decided I would move back up on to Scott's Main Range and south along it that night so that I could look for my mauve Melaleuca near Bran Jan soon after daylight on Thursday. Then if there were no abatement in the heat-wave conditions, I would go down on to the Kowmung for breakfast and creep along up Gingra Creek, keeping by the water and taking most of the day if necessary. For the slugging ascent of Craft's Ridge, about 1900 ft through scrub, and the rest of the trip back to Kanangra - well, this could be in the "cool" of the evening on Thursday or very early on Friday.

At 7.0 pm, with lengthening shadows, I started off up the ridge, and had climbed maybe 500 ft or so before I realised that the atmosphere was almost pleasant. Then, as I climbed out of the sink of the valley it dawned on me that the wind, which had been strong from the north-west all day, was now piping on my left cheek. Cheers - it was a southerly buster. I went on into the moonlight.

It took a long while to cool down. At 9.0 pm I was back at the church encampment, and decided I could let down my hair and spend another night there while the temperature moderated. By 1.0 am it was necessary to switch from the sheet-bag to my summer-weight sleeping bag, and dawn on Thursday came in cloudy and quiet, with just a breath of a south-west breeze. I felt it would become clear, sunny and probably pretty hot later, as I could see some open sky in the direction of what little wind was

blowing. Hopefully, though, it would be a lot less torrid than the two previous days. This forecast, which was arrived at without reference to either the cat or the milkman, and purely from the size and shape of the horse-droppings on the Cedar Road, was also surprisingly accurate.

Off at 5.15, with hardly any light in the gloomy morning. Not even *clair de lune* - the moon was down. This brought me to Bran Jan at 6.30, with firm but grey daylight. There on the patch of grass where the hut used to stand was a queer creature like a miniature wallaby - barely 15 inches high, black or dark brown with a creamy chest, heavily taloned front paws, and a ridiculous black tail over 2 feet long. It was foraging around and made no attempt to move off. Indeed it waited while I took a couple of slides, then slowly shambled into the bush. I noticed it was blind in one eye - in fact I suspect the injury had happened in recent weeks from the flies clustering around the eye socket.

Leaving the pack there, I went on the short distance to the top of the Big Stringybark Range, and began casting around. Plenty of white-flowering *melaleuca* from small shrubs up to good sized trees, but I had almost given up when I spotted a pink-purple patch, and there it was - my elusive mauve bottlebrush. The flowering was almost over and most of what remained was ready to crumble at a touch, but I did the best I could with what was left, cursing the dullness of the light. Back to Bran Jan, on with the pack, and down to breakfast at about 8.0 am on the Kowmung. Meanwhile the cloud dispersed and the sun shone - almost too warmly.

There's no doubt three hours walking before breakfast stimulates the appetite, even when the day ahead doesn't look too attractive. I tried to remember what the going was like along Gingra Creek, and from distant memories dredged up a recollection that it resembles Breakfast Creek. I calculated it was about six miles to Craft's Ridge and found myself quoting Banjo Patterson's Ballad of the Calliope - "if we make a knot an hour, it's way enough to steer" - well, enough to get to Gabes Creek and the foot of Craft's Ridge by 3.0 or 4.0 pm. Then - well, the weather would dictate the next move.

In the event, Gingra Creek was a piece of cake. The day did get quite warm, but at times there was a pleasant fresh wind. The banks of the creek have, I think, suffered from the 1978 floods and in many places where I am sure there were level grassy flats, it is now a case of trudging over river stones. In places, though, I found sections of the old cut trail in quite fair condition, especially where the track had been carved out of the hillside some distance above the creek to by-pass rocky defiles. That trail really paid off at the strange little ravine of purple slaty rocks just downstream from Gabes Creek, where the going in the creek bed looked difficult in spots. Although I spent almost five hours getting to Gabes Creek, this included a leisureed lunch break, plus two or three fairly lengthy halts to "cool off".

From about 2.0 pm to 4.0 pm I rested in the shade of a good sized *casuarina*, where there was a nice pool of clear water flowing over multi-

coloured stones. This was followed by a final dunking in shirt and shorts, and I addressed myself to the ridge, taking it over so slowly. It was steep, it was bushy, but nowhere really troublesome and most of the way there was even a faint pad where others had gone before. As I gained height the view became impressive but not photographic because of a thick heat haze that dwelled over the whole landscape.

The stack of splintered boulders which forms Pages Pinnacle came up at 6.30 pm, and half an hour later I was rounding the north end of Craft's Wall to join the Gangerang track. The Grand Gorge was so hazed that the Spires were barely visible, and the high ground around Big Misty was a vague gold-grey silhouette against the fiery western sky.

I sauntered along now, pretending to myself that I could really go a good deal faster if necessary. I was quite amazed at my feeling of well-being considering the harsh weather of the past three days. In fact, it was then I resolved to write up the trip, not because it was in any way a remarkable one, but because my experience may just happen to help any other walker caught out in similar extreme conditions. The key points appeared to be - (1) Walk slowly (2) Keep wet if you can (3) Walk by night or in the cooler morning and evening hours whenever you can.

In the end I lived up to Point (3), arriving back at Kanangra car park with an almost full moon over my right shoulder, the daylight virtually gone, and the clock showing 9.0 pm. In fact, I arrived "au clair de la lune".

* * * * *

AS THE SPARKS FLY.

by Peter Christian.

As the sparks fly like fire-flies up through the trees
Some shine embedded in the canopy of stars.
As the warmth and laughter with cheery souls does please,
Happy am I in bushland with friends of gentle heart.

As the shadows dance on the ghostly eucalypt,
They tempt me to climb up, come up for one quick waltz.
As the flames lick and scorch the virgin branch is stripped,
Just as fickle greed licks at our finer feelings.

As the sparks fly, mischievous smoke dips and sweeps,
Weaving now through unkempt hair, flaring my nostrils wide.
As my thoughts wander on the wild world that sleeps,
How much longer will this peace and joy be here to share?

As the glowing coals quickly pale to dying embers,
Faces leave the dimming light, retire for the night.
As the voices die the owls haunting cry sadly remembers,
Ashes cool as content we slumber, deep in the wilderness.

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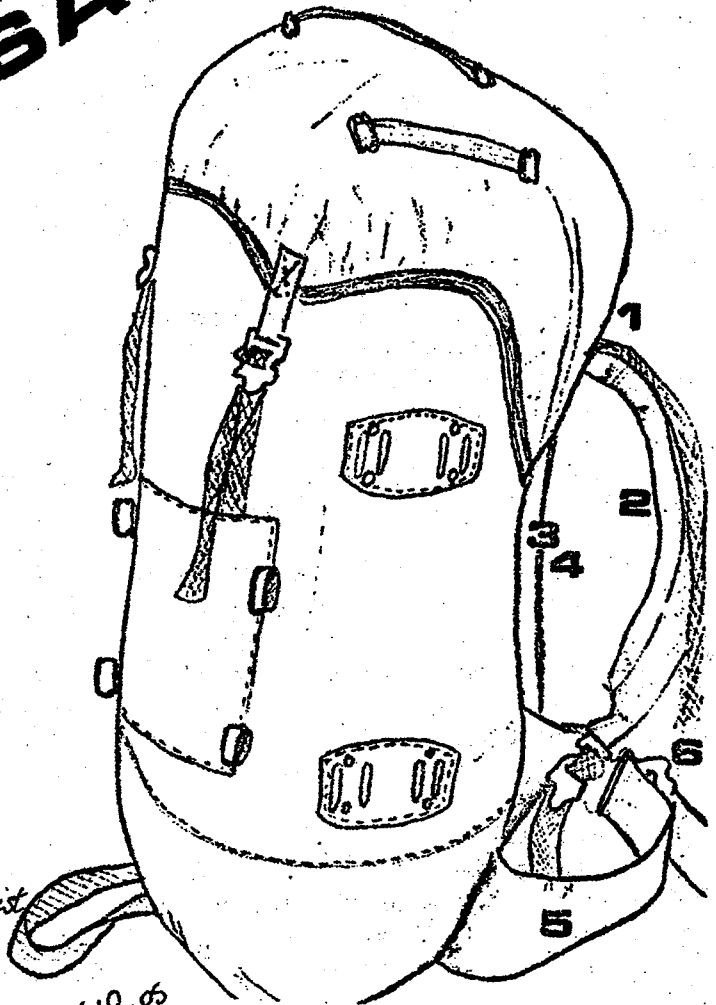
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THE FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING.

by Barry Wallace.

It was a warm and humid evening with the occasional light spatter of rain when the President called the 20 or so members present to order at about 2017 hours and began the meeting. Bob Milne was the first new member called, but prior commitments had him teaching a tech class "somewhere in the west". John Sproggon and Jo Van Sommers however were welcomed in the usual manner.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and received with no business arising.

Correspondence included the usual magazines and circulars together with a copy of the F.B.W. minutes, a letter from the N.P.A. regarding the Ettrema Wilderness, a Federation letter to George and Helen Gray (?), a letter from the National Trust regarding a forthcoming enquiry into off-road vehicles, and a notice about the forthcoming N.P.W.S. Foundation Appeal for funds.

The Treasurer's Report showed a starting balance of \$1336.55, Income of \$227.4, Expenditure of \$89.00 and a Closing Balance of \$1,474.69, so we are bankruptcy-bound just for the present. Treasurer also sought and received approval for investment of \$1,000 from the Coolana account.

Business arising saw a motion passed requiring the Coolana Committee to meet at three-monthly intervals and report to the General Meeting.

The Walks Report began with Bob Hodgson leading 12 people on a beautiful Davies Canyon trip on the 12,13,14 January. Marcia Shappert reported 4 members and unspecified others enjoying a very pleasant weekend at Coolana at the same time. John Redfern's Kanangra Walls trip saw 8 persons sweating their way up Roots Ridge to reach the cars at 2030 on the Sunday. Speaking of Sundays, Ian Debert's Sunday walk that weekend attracted 11 people into the burnt-out ruins of Kangaroo Creek.

The following weekend, 19,20,21 saw Peter Levander leading 10 people on a Kowmung li-lo trip which saw a severe outbreak of gravel rash among the li-los because of the low river level. Len Newland's Springwood ramble attracted 23 starters, and the other Sunday walk, Sheila Binns' Waterfall to Heathcote ramble saw 7 souls brave the searing heat through the many pools.

The Australia Day weekend saw Bob Hodgson and four other garlic-sodden wrecks exploring Yarramun and Dumbano creeks. The same weekend, Spiro led 13 members, 5 prospectives and one visitor on a not-quite-to-programme walk from Kanangra. Neil Brown's day walk on the Sunday saw 29 bods churning the waters of Karloo Pool.

Tony Marshall's li-lo trip on the weekend 2,3,4 February went sans li-los but attracted 5 people who could swim without them. Ian Debert reported 17 people on his Tootie Creek base-camp trip, and the Sunday walk

saw Joe Marton substituting for an indisposed Bill Hall with a party of around 20 people on the Waterfall to Lilyvale track.

The weekend of 9,10,11 February saw Alastair Battye in the Wollongambe, in a heatwave, in daylight, with a party which varied from 15 on the first day to 24 on the second. There were obvious signs of overcrowding if not overuse of the Wollongambe portion of the route. Gem Gagne's Gourmet weekend attracted 9 people on a ver-ry hot slob trip on the Wollondilly. The Sunday saw Jim Brown lead 32 people on the Waterfall to Heathcote ramble with 2 dropouts along the way.

The Federation Report brought news of concern over government changes to the Heritage Commission and Conservation Acts. A motion was carried that we send a telegram to Mr. Paul Landa and write to Mr. Mulock expressing our concern.

General Business brought a motion that we write to Paul Landa suggesting a 5 c. deposit on all soft drink cans and bottles. It was also resolved that attendance statistics for committee members be no longer included in the annual report.

After all that it was just a matter of announcements, and the meeting ended at 2140.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS 1979.

The subscription rates for 1979 were decided at the Annual General Meeting and are now due and payable. They are as follows:-

Ordinary Member	\$10.50
Married couple	\$12.50
Full-time student member	\$ 6.50

The subscription for non-active members is decided by committee and will be advised later.

The magazine is posted free to all members, but non-active members and others who would like to receive the magazine can do so for an annual subscription this year of \$4.50

The Treasurer will take cash or cheques any time - either in the Clubroom, or posted to Box 4476 G.P.O., Sydney, 2001.

SPIRO'S SPECTACULAR.

by David Cotton.

Nineteen people attended Spiro Hajinakitas' spectacular Australia Day weekend walk from Kanangra- Gingora Ridge - Kowmung River - Cox's River - Kanangra River - Kanangra Creek - Kanangra.

The people were as varied as their packs, tall thin people with tall thin packs, short fat people with short fat packs and some rather roundish people with roundish packs..... I suppose if the pack fits, wear it. Regulars included Dot Butler, Bill Burke, John Redfern, Brian Hart, with a nice mixture of members and energetic prospective members.

Kanangra weather was quite typical with heavy fog and light rain, which caused a slight delay by the party losing the track very early in the trip, and the proposed route down to the Kowmung via Gingera Creek was substituted by the much faster walking route along Gingera Ridge as we got off to a rather late start.

Lunch on Saturday was a rather pitiful spectacle with walkers moping about feeding and refreshing themselves without getting wetter or their gear wet. I was walking in my undershorts, which is a very practical attire for the Kanangra in the wet, so I was able to have a sit down lunch without getting any wetter than I already was. My gay rendition of "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head" didn't seem to be generally appreciated.

The flood damage along the Kowmung - Cox's - Kanangra River/Creek systems that we have heard so much about recently is astonishing. On my last trip along the same route it was mostly grassy banks with a mixture of lawyer vine, blackberry, stinging nettles and snakes. Now all this has been replaced by vast stretches of large loose round river rocks and boulders. Almost everyone had trouble with their feet and footwear, and sticking plaster repair jobs were in progress at most rest breaks.

The Cox's River (I prefer to call it the Lithgow River) was unusually clean, although the underwater vegetation showed that it is still badly polluted. One of our prospective members was suffering from extreme thirst so I suggested that if she drank the Cox's and ate a biscuit to get her stomach acids working it would probably be all right. Brian Hart strongly disagreed with this theory; it seems to be a dilemma between getting a belly-ache or becoming dehydrated. Ideally new chums should carry some reliable or boiled water until they can last between billy stops or learn to find good water in side creeks or seeps.

Sunday afternoon provided me with a little excitement. As we had made camp early I had gone off wandering by myself, I had had a bad fall during the afternoon and after sitting around for a short while I had stiffened up like a robot that had been left out in the rain. I had got upstream about three or four miles when I heard what I thought was a faint "coo-ee". On giving reply a pack of dingoes started howling between where I was and where the camp was. Not knowing whether a pack of dingoes will attack man,

I grabbed the nearest piece of suitable wood (weighing about half a ton and about twenty feet long) and decided to change it for a more suitable waddy of about five feet in length and thick enough to get a good handgrip around, and made my way back to camp as quickly as I could. I was pleased to note that the pack of dingoes retreated up the mountain as I approached them. The area in the vicinity of the Maroocha Karoo Creek is really spectacular and no doubt a dingoes' paradise.

The climax of the trip was the rather short and very steep climb out to Kanangra via Murdering Gully with its beautiful and varying views of the Thurat Spires, looking so large at the beginning of the climb and then so small as one climbs higher and looks down on these incredible formations.

The whole trip was spectacular. I took about 240 black and white photographs to add to my growing collection. The weather cleared during Saturday and the remainder of the weekend was mostly clear with some over-cast periods.

A beaut trip, Spiro. Well done.

* * * * *

SOCIAL NOTES FOR APRIL.

by Christine Austin.

April 11th.

This night has been set aside as a free night to discuss Easter walks. However, we thought your discussions could be flavoured with some cheese and bread. Please bring your own bread (cheese will be provided). If time permits you to make it, some home-made bread would be greatly welcomed.

Don't forget that the General Meeting will be on the third Wednesday in April (18th), and that on the 25th April (Anzac Day) the clubroom will be closed.

S.B.W. OFFICE BEARERS - 1979.

The following office-bearers and committee members were elected at the S.B.W. Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday, 14th March, 1979:-

President	* Fazeley Read
Vice-Presidents	* Bob Hodgson
	Len Newland
Secretary	* Sheila Binns
Assistant Secretary	* Barbara Bruce
Treasurer	* Neil Brown
Walks Secretary	* Spiro Hajinakitas
Social Secretary	* Ailsa Hocking
Assistant Social Secretary	Not yet appointed
Membership Secretary	* John Redfern
Assistant Membership Secretary	Not yet appointed
Committee Members	* Hans Stichter
	* Gordon Lee
	* Marcia Shappert
	* Denise Brown
Federation Delegates	* Christine Austin
	* Stephen Hodgman
	Spiro Hajinakitas
	Gordon Lee
Substitution Federation Delegate	Not yet appointed
Conservation Secretary	Alex Colley
Magazine Editor	Helen Gray
Magazine Business Manager	Bill Burke
Duplicator Operator	Bob Duncan
Keeper of Maps & Timetables	John Holly
Equipment Hire	- - - -
Search & Rescue Contacts	Marcia Shappert
	Don Finch
	Ray Hookway
Archivist	Phil Butt
Auditor	Gordon Redmond
Solicitor	Colin Broad
Trustees	Heather White
	Gordon Redmond
	Bill Burke
Coolana Management Committee	Dot Butler
	George Gray
	John Redfern
	Brian Hart
	Barry Wallace
Kosciusko Huts Association Delegate	Bill Burke
Projectionist	Hans Beck

* Indicates members of the Committee.

- - - - -

Paddy's

Lightweight bushwalking and camping gear.

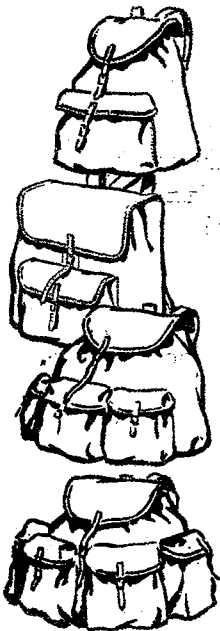
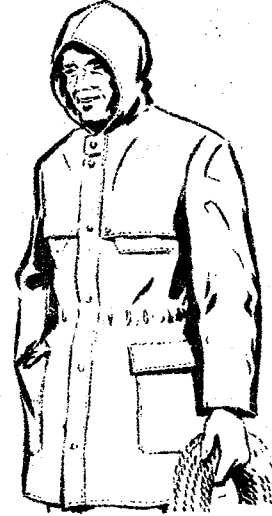


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Everything for the 'well dressed' bushwalker ... heavy wool shirts, wind jackets, duvets, overpants, string singlets, bush hats, webbing belts etc.



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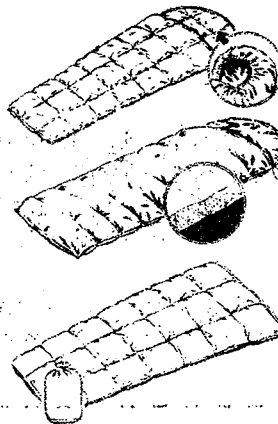
A single pocket, shaped rucksack. Suitable for over-night camping. Weight 1½lbs.

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Has sewn-in curved bottom for extra comfort in carrying. Will hold 30lbs. 2 pocket model 1½lbs. 3 pocket model 1½lbs.

PIONEER RUCKSACK

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Paddy's

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DEEPEST SYMPATHY

To our two club members Hans and Otto Stichter, we offer deepest sympathy on the recent death of their father, Mr. Otto Stichter Snr., in a car accident. To their mother, injured in the same accident, we wish a speedy recovery.

OUR PRESIDENT.

Fazeley is now out of hospital and back home at Neutral Bay. She is managing to get around on her crutches with one leg in heavy plaster. She even managed to get to the Annual General Meeting!

On February 27th, as we were putting the February magazine together at the Gray's place, who should arrive but Fazeley ("I've come to help as promised") en route from Maitland to North Shore Hospital. It was too late to alter that magazine, so it's hoped no one travelled to Maitland after that date!

Please add to your new membership list (non-active):-

Alice and Allan Wyborn - Phone 063.5941-53

NOT TO BE OUTDONE

John Redfern, our Membership Secretary, who joined the club at the same time as Fazeley, has made 1979 his unlucky year too. He fell in Barber's Creek last weekend, badly cutting his left leg below the knee. (Yes! Identical place to Fazeley's injury!)

He, too, is recovering at home (with umpteen stitches in his leg). But he, too, made it to the Annual General Meeting. Get well soon, John.

We regret to report the death of a former member, Claude Haynes on February 12. Claude joined Sydney Bushwalkers in 1945; from 1949 to 1955 he was club auditor.

As well as being a walker, he was always a keen surfer (he was a Bondi Life Saver for many years). Despite being blind in his last years, Claude still played bowls. It was following a game of bowls that he died, at his home on the Gold Coast.

AUTUMN WALKS PROGRAMME.Correction to TEST WALKS markings.

Unfortunately a few errors in the indication of TEST WALKS occurred in the current (March to May) Walks Programme.

Please alter your Walks Programme as indicated below. It would also be appreciated if members mentioned these corrections to prospective members, as prospectives do not always get a copy of the magazine.

Trips NOT indicated as Test Walks, but which should be marked Ø.

- 1) Easter - 13/16 April - Budawangs. Leader: TONY DENHAM. Day Test Walks.
Ø
- 2) Sunday 29th April - Blackheath. Leader: DIANA LYNN.
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Trips shown as Test Walks which are NOT of the required standard and are not acceptable as Test Walks.

- 1) Anzac Day 25th April - Cowan to Hawkesbury River.
Leader: JIM BROWN. (All track walking)
- 2) Sunday 6th May - Waterfall to Engadine. Leader: NEIL BROWN.

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CONGRATULATIONS to Doone and Lesley Wyborn

on the birth of their first baby, a boy.

BLOOD AND SLIME OR REUNION'79

by Puffing Billy

There should be a special protection by the Almighty, against people like George Gray. With that baby-twinkle innocence in his smile and the beguiling softness of his accents, I just naturally trusted him. Never again, though.

"There's water laid on at Coolana now," he said, "both at the shed and at the campfire area." But I never dreamt that he meant laid on all round - above, below, in our hair, in our pants, in our kids and in our pudding. By tea-time Saturday it sloshed around our ankles; by campfire time it washed our knees; on Sunday morning it ruined six dampers; and at the carpark on Sunday afternoon, with David Cotton and Victor Lewin both bogged to the axeltrees, we could have lilo'd down the road.

"It's the wettest reunion since 1950," yelled Jim and Kath above the roar of the rain. For 30 years consecutively, come pancake day, they've attended reunions as Mr. and Mrs. Brown, and for unknown years before as Mr. and Miss (separately, of course). So I believed them. And later, the deluge really started.

But I'm ahead of myself; let's go back to the beginning. First, though, a moment's grace, if you please, before I write more - I must tend my itching leech bites before I drip blood on the page; and you can take time to scratch yours.

Trusty H-frame on my back, lilo under one arm and esky under the other, I mooched off down the track with Heather and Don Finch doing their second all-home-comforts pack-horsing trip down the hill. My, of my, how we used to look down on those hikers on the Palms track with their trannies, their Sunday Teles, their lemonade and their sheilas under their arms! Though, come to think of it, there must always have been an element of the hiker in S.B.W; else, where did all those second generation reuners come from?

There was the faintest hint of a drizzle in the air, interspersed with bright patches of sun as I came across George, under the direction of his manager, Helen, erecting the signs to the campfire site. He pressed steadily ahead with his task, to a helpful accompaniment from Phil Butt. "That arrow's pointing straight up the tree. You'll have everyone trying to climb it. It's as bad as the road sign that says stop on red light. How can you, when it's up on a pole? Or, radar used to sheck speed. Well, what checks it now?" I was really surprised to learn the adjectives that George's soft voice can muster, when moved.

Arrived at the site, I pitched my tent on a terrace overlooking the campfire amphitheatre. Then I decided to move it. Helen catching sight of me called out, "Didn't you like the look of us?" Simple questions merit simple answers. "No," I answered enigmatically. Farbeit to confess, in public, that an old stager like me had pitched his abode on a red-bull-Joe nest.

Lolling back on lilo, bewitched by the early afternoon sun into thinking that a pleasant weekend lay ahead, and with a mellowing cup of Nirvana in my hand, I watched the reuners coming down the hill. Belinda McKenzie in vibrating yellow; Gladys Roberts with her knitting needles clicking; Stephen and Wendy Hodgman by pushbike from Berry via Mt. Cambewarra, no less; Spiro under a Japanese parasol to keep the sun off and with the kids in tow - hey! wait on. SPIRO WITH KIDS??! Relax - they were borrowed, of course. The Rigbys came from the deep south, also with borrowed family.

"I'm looking for Jenny and Stan", said a passer by. "Has anyone seen them?"

"You don't look for the Maddens", quipped an old hand, "you listen."

Next, clompety-clomp, clompty-clomp with her porters George Gray and Bob Hodgson, came Fazeley, our first-ever four-legged president, encased from toe to hip in two and a half tonnes of plaster of Paris. And with her own private throne.

"Throne?" you ask. "since when did we enthrone our presidents?" Well, now, since when did you ever try to answer the call of nature in the bush with tonnes of plaster encasing you? The throne did present a problem, though: how to site it and the president's tent so that there was sufficient visual and acoustic separation but with minimum hobbling distance to campfire, water tap, the shed and surrounding friends. Fortunately, George found a thick thicket of lilli-pilli conveniently nearby.

MER-RAA-AAOW-WOO-AAAH!!! The Nirvana spilled from my hand; the sun ducked behind a towering cloud; fifteen kids ducked behind their mothers' skirts. What was that? It was Don Finch, aided by several megabells of chain saw, cutting down and cutting up a dead tree for Bill Burke, Jim Vatiliotis, Phil Butt and Barry Wallace to build the camp fire.

Soon, all was in readiness. The sun reappeared; colourful tents dotted the natural amphitheatre; the professional-looking camp-fire pile graced its centre; colourful people wandered around in gossiping reunion; Bruce McInnes pitched his tent nearby and reinforced the supply of Nirvana; Debbie and Geoffrey gathered the firewood - and Jupiter Pluvius arrived. And Jupiter Pluvius stayed. It got darker; it got noisier; it got wetter; it put out our fire with the steak half raw; and the only cheer was the inner cheer. We cowered in our tents and hunched over our half-cooked dinners and glowered at the liquid blackness of the surrounding night.

And then the true genius of the Coolana Committee, and the inner wisdom of the years of effort by Dot, George and their assistants was revealed for all to witness.

"We must have a shed," they had said, "and a fireplace in it, for the times of total fire ban when you're not allowed a fire in the open, not even fire water." But we now had a shed for our Reunion '79, which otherwise could ne'er have been held in the teeming torrent of that Saturday night.

Down the hill we waded and swam in our hooded anoraks and groundsheets, until more than 80 - of which half were offspring - were dripping on Dot's crazy-slate concrete floor: on lilos, cushions, rugs, a folding chair for Fazeley and, would you believe, a queen-size inner-spring mattress.

By the light of LPG, we had Paganini, Larry Adler and Burl Ives, swinging along through all our campfire classics, until better light revealed them as Gordon Lee, Bob Hodgson and Len Newland respectively, wity Barbara Bruce as conductor, swingster, M.C. and lead singer all in one. Eventually, we realised that we could hear our voices singing, instead of Jupiter Pluvius roaring on the roof. And lo! while we were in the safety of the shed, old Jupiter held off and listened.

By way of divertisement, the Dot Butler theatre company acted out the degenerate tale of "Lord Lundy", the bearded baby Don Finch with dummy and bonnet, whose mother's elder sister (Judith Rostron) was "married" to a parvenue" (David R.), and who opined

".... drat the miserable, peevish brat.

Why don't they drown the little beast?"

At which point I could have sworn I heard real-life mother-in-law, Frances, murmur approvingly, "Hear, hear".

Neither the efforts of Helen Gray as his mother, Susan as the cat with detachable ears and tail, Christine Austin as "his mother's mother, who he'd some dignity or other", nor Barry Wallace as his pa could prevent his degeneration through successive posts as Secretary for India, The Colonies and War to Curator of Big Ben. Until, at last, Jim Brown - The Duke, his ancient grand sire - could bear the shame no more and quoth "My language fails. Go out and govern New South Wales."

They were succeeded by our singing group, the Scrub Bashers - the voices of John Redfern, Ailsa Hocking, Judith Rostron and that Lynnet-chorister-turned-from-Aberdeen, Debbie McInnes - all accompanied by the aforesaid orchestral trio and leader. Through their harmony, we heard the English folk song "The Lime Juice Tub", Alex Hood's "Bill Jinks" and a trilogy of songs by migrants formerly working on the Snowy Mountains project, "Blowering Dam", "Old Talbingo" and "Watson's Crag".

Jim Brown inducted President Fazeley for the second time, assisted by just enough has-been presidents to festoon her with the accoutrements of office. "Just what I need", said Fazeley with feeling when The Bone was handed to her.

To conclude the concert, Digby Rigby as the lost leader, and Helen Gray as the "demure, shy prospective" he got lost with, regaled us with a poem (?) from a bygone issue of the magazine. And, of course, on that particular Saturday night the verse that brought the house down was Helen's expressive lines,

"In mud and slime they wander,
Prospective near to tears;
Just because it's oozing
Up around her ears".

Spiro now announced that in the period that the rain had held off, Dot Butler, Christine Austin and other willing hands had helped him to prepare the supper. Soon, we thronged around with our mugs of steaming cocoa and coffee, with good, rich fruit cake to replenish the energy we had expended in singing.

The 1979 reunion sing-song was over. Or was it just beginning? Going up the hill towards my tent and bed, I found the official campfire merrily blazing, lighting up the amphitheatre with a cheerful, orange glow, while the voices of Barry and Barbara led the singing and the skirl of the bagpipes in the background made a pleasant lullaby. Then Jupiter Pluvius returned.

But down in the tin shed, things were still happening. And, by golly, they went on happening until one thirty Sunday morning when Bob Hodgson blew his last, long harmonica breath and the assembly prepared to - hey! hang on! what's this dual apparition of push bikes materialising through the flood? Peter Sargent and Leon Vella, by pushbike through the furious stormy rages, all the way from Sydney. And still alive. "Have we missed all the singing?" they asked, so breathlessly, so damply, so plaintively. Bob Hodgson found another breath, to blow another chord, and the revelling revived until three-thirty!

On Sunday morning, dawn broke like a tidal bore in the firth of Forth! Four times I awakened, listened to the Indian Pacific roaring over my head, cowered deeper into my Paddy-down and hoped that by some miracle my breakfast eggs might cook themselves. The fifth-time, a different miracle occurred: in the silence, albeit grey, I found that Jupiter had relented long enough to let the breakfast fires start up around the camp, and for the Sunday gossipers and photographers to start their rounds. Soon, we were all self-consciously peeing over our shoulders whenever Don Matthews or David Cotton got within telephoto range.

Ere long, a furtive parasol came creeping through the bushes; and out from under groped a hand to test the temperature of the various corners of the campfire. Satisfied, at last, it deposited a bush-oven made of aluminium pan and plate, and covered it ever so scientifically with glowing coals. Its foray finished, the parasol departed as furtively as it had come.

A nervy morning then began. Between showers, the cooks came in waves to the embers, and retreated whenever the rain returned. At each temporary clearing in the torrent, a new batch of dampers appeared. Black ones, white ones, big ones, small ones - and a brilliant red one, stained by the blood of a thousand leeches. Gem Gagne's with a golden-brown crust, redolent of the colours in a Fitzpatrick travelogue. Susan Gray's creative, heart-shaped damper - was she trying to convey a message to the judge? Joan Rigby's with a cup of white wine on top. Definitely a message to the judge.

Then the parasol reappeared and out from under came Spiro, timing his entry as dramatically - and as fittingly - as Mephistopheles at the fall of Faust. Nonchalantly, he scraped a hole in the ashes and a-a-a-ah, the sighs of veneration as he revealed his maiden-brown masterpiece with characteristic panache.

Meanwhile, down at the shed, a ranger from the NPWLS dropped in to discuss prospects for a mutually beneficial land swap. Dot Butler, Bill Burke and Brian Hart promptly gave him an impressive, erudite Royal Tour of the Coolana hectares.

Now appeared the damper judge. Our mouths salivated and we waited with baited breath for the verdict. Could this be the year that some greater genius would achieve immortality by toppling the might Spiro as the all-time damper champ?

Drawing deep his breath, the judge began:

"We can live without literature, music and art;
We can live without conscience and live without heart;
We can live without talent and live without books;
But civilized man cannot live without cooks."

Then he continued, "And by the looks of some of these dampers, it could be dangerous to live with them!"

The judge soon demonstrated that he not only had a finely developed knowledge of the art of cooking damper; but a finely developed instinct for survival, too. He dragooned Dot Butler and Len Newland as tasters. Colour, crustiness, taste, texture - all were carefully savoured, and savoured again, until four were on one side and classed as equal in superiority of calibre. And then, one other; a solitary, larger, golden-browner, crustier, better-textured, tastier damper found favour above them all - and 'twas the maestro's! The year has still to come to topple Spiro from his throne. But it could be coming soon. "Next year, we'll put Super Glue 5000 in his flour", I heard a McInnes voice whisper.

Now, here ends our story. Here returns our darkest enemy, J.P., with renewed energy after his morning rest. It rained, it poured, it bucketed down. We shrank into our tents and ate our cold lunches until, tails between our legs and groundsheets over our bodies and packs, we beat our hasty retreat up the hill, revved our motors and ran for home. All except Fazeley. Mink can run in the rain on four legs, but not Fazeley. So, enter the knights in shining armour, albeit rusty and wet. Magdy Hammad and Victor Lewis, Sherpa porters extraordinaire, portaging the president and her tonnes of plaster to the haven of the cars.

And the water is probably still laid on, upon Coolana's folds. It certainly was as I burned the last of the leeches off me and headed home.

Note: Facts, opinions and other statements in this article are not shared by the author, the club, its officers, their friends nor any other persons within or without our ken. Names used are fictitious and do not refer to real persons alive, dead or nearly dead. No suits will be entertained for libel, defamation, breach of promise, pollution of the ecology, swindling of motels nor any other nefarious practice.
