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THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

Established June, 1931.  
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A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers, Box 4476 G.P.O., Sydney, 2001. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening from 7.30 pm at the Wireless Institute Building, 14 Atchison Street, St. Leonards. Enquiries concerning the Club should be referred to Ann Ravn, Telephone 798,8607.

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NOVEMBER, 1981.

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MAIN STREET, GROSE VALLEY.

by Bill Gamble.

Some recently resurrected notes of mine refer to a walk led by Ian Debert on the weekend of 21/22 March, 1981. The entry on the autumn walks programme says:

GROSE VALLEY - Mt. Hay Road - Lockley Pylon - Du Faur Head -  
Bluegum Forest - Victoria Falls. Saturday morning car swap.  
Maps: Katoomba, Mt. Wilson 1:31680. 14 km. Medium.

The notes interest me because they leave a clear impression of a rather crowded bushwalk, something I have felt for a while about the Grose Valley. Anyway, the notes have been now stitched into a belated account for the magazine.

Flush from his big win in Paddy Pallin's 50th Anniversary Outdoor Photographic competition, Ian was a late starter getting away from Sydney on the Friday evening. It must have been around 9.30 pm before we left the exhibition of photographs being held in the Sydney University Law School Assembly Hall. In Joy Hynes' car were Colin Barnes, Julie English (a visitor from Santa Cruz, California), Bill Gamble and, of course, Ian. Stan and Jenny Madden shot through in their VW Campmobile.

There was a brief stop in Blaxland for a couple of Ian's Apex friends - Jeff and Kerry - to join us; and sometime around midnight we turned off the Great Western Highway at Leura for the run out to the Pinnacles for a car camp. Such is the steadily deteriorating condition of this dirt road, that the muffler came adrift and by the time temporary repairs were effected it was near 1.00 am before we reached the water tank. Stan and Jenny had long since pulled off the road and settled down for the night. Bob Sames and Kathy Gero were disturbed by our noisy arrival. So too was Bill Holland, if my memory is right. Under a full moon and warm temperatures, most settled for ground sheets along the side of the road. Indicative of a desire for the comforts of life, Ian and Joy inflated rubber mattresses (by use of an electric pump, not by hand) and then reclined in a degree of comfortable decadence by the light of the silv'ry moon.

The clear, warm conditions continued into the morning, but not much farther. By the time the car swap had occurred, it was after 10.00 am and clouds were scudding across the sky from the south as we walked out from the Pinnacles. John Newman arrived with the car swap.

We ambled out towards Lockley Pylon, behind another group of walkers, in rather humid conditions and scrambled up to the Pylon. Someone recorded our names for posterity in the book. It was then suggested that we ought to get ourselves into gear and move down to Bluegum Forest for lunch. In retrospect, I think a weekend walk of 14 km on tracks is conducive to a certain slothfulness.

There was an extended lunch at Bluegum Forest amid the visiting throngs and then, for some reason, a hell-bent race to Little Bluegum for overnight camp. The drizzle had now become persistent, but the generous camp fire gave off enough heat to quickly dry any accumulating dampness on clothes.

Sing-along efforts were hesitant, but conversation was spirited and varied, assisted by assorted medicinal fortifications. Lateness of hour and the rising level of dampness eventually put us all down for the night.

The following morning, in a brilliant burst of sustained walking for about an hour, we made it through to the turnoff to Pierces Pass. In what was probably the bushwalkers' equivalent of getting one's gear off in Martin Place, some of the party decided on a swim in a long, deep pool. It was well worth the exposure. We left this busy place and found a break in the weather and a warm lunchstop at Burra Korain campsite. Enroute, we met briefly Tony Marshall's aborted Zobel Gully walk coming down the valley. Rudi Dezelin stopped for a few minutes, but the remainder seemed hell bent to get somewhere. They all added to a valley peppered with people. At Burra Korain, Ian produced what looked like a converted tennis racquet to go yabbing, and some followed his unsuccessful efforts with interest.

The uphill grind to the Victoria Falls Lookout contained certain diversions. Kerry, a newcomer to walking, found the going a little tough, but a transfer of gear to other packs put her back on the track and we did not have to leave her behind. Also, Joy slipped with grace and style off a rock and into a deep pool, reflecting her keen interest in Bob's effort to lure a yabby successfully.

From Victoria Falls Lookout carpark, all the rest is literally downhill. There was time, using Stan's Campmobile, for a short diversion in fading light to show our Californian visitor the Megalong and Jamison Valleys and the splendour of Mount Solitary from well-known vantage points. A brief stop at Leura to join the reclaimed vehicle left at the Pinnacles, then, for some, a chinese meal at Blaxland and copious cups of tea.

Finally, there is an impression. The beauty of the Grose Valley is undoubted, but its place in a bushwalker's hiking list could well have to change. The centre part of the valley is crowded for more than day hiking, if peace and quiet and few people are sought. More attention may have to be given to the Upper Grose above Burra Korain, and the Grose downstream from Bluegum Forest.

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The CLUB AUCTION held on 28th October was a highly successful event. Despite petrol rationing about 60 people attended, and many were in a buying mood.

The Auctioneer, Charlie Brown, was in top form and had an appropriate and humorous remark for each item presented. What's more he kept it up for an hour and a half, and almost managed to sell Dot's sandals (which had been removed to allow her to creep up on bidders and wring their arms). Bidding for some quality items was brisk and even white elephants went for modest sums. After the close of formal bidding, people gathered about the left-overs and some supplementary items were disposed of.

The whole evening was great entertainment and produced \$192.00, which was increased to about \$210 by subsequent deals. It has now been paid in to the Coolana Account.

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CONSERVATION NOTES.

by Alex Colley.

UTILISING THE BOTANIC GARDENS.

On 25th October a party of SPROUT members arrived at the Botanic Gardens equipped with chain saws, axes and a Management Plan. Their aim was to make proper productive use of this hitherto "locked-up" area.

Explaining the aims of the...loggers the spokeswoman for SPROUT, Miss Penny Figgis, made the following statement:-

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

I represent a new organisation called SPROUT which stands for "Sensible, Practical Residents' Organisation for the Utilisation of Trees".

It developed as an off-shoot or splinter group of the timber industry. As they seem to be busy logging rainforests, we've stepped in to fill the gap.

We formed because we could no longer stand by and watch the Botanic Gardens remain as unproductive land. What is the use of it if it doesn't produce anything? In fact a valuable timber resource is simply being locked up by a minority group of selfish recreationists!

I may be going out on a limb here but many of these trees are actually more than one hundred years old and therefore clearly over-mature, even decadent. Surely good sense dictates that they should be replaced by smart young saplings with vigor and rather more self-discipline? Surely we don't want the Botanic Gardens to become a cemetery for trees?

What is needed is a balanced approach. The gardens should be managed to allow multiple abuse. Everyone should have a stake in the gardens!

SPROUT has established that the logging of these trees could bring in at least a few hundred dollars which is not a bad return for the mere \$50,000 of public money we shall spend on building and maintaining logging roads.

And while speaking of logging roads it is very important to realise that these logging roads will open up this locked-up area to the car-borne public who have previously been denied their democratic right to total access to absolutely everywhere! No longer will it be the preserve of elitist family picnickers.

Now lest any extremist, communist-paid agitators ask any emotional, irrational and naturally ill-informed questions about the wisdom of our plan I want to assure you that in the interests of balance we have followed accepted procedures.

We have prepared an Environmental Impact Statement and a Management Plan.

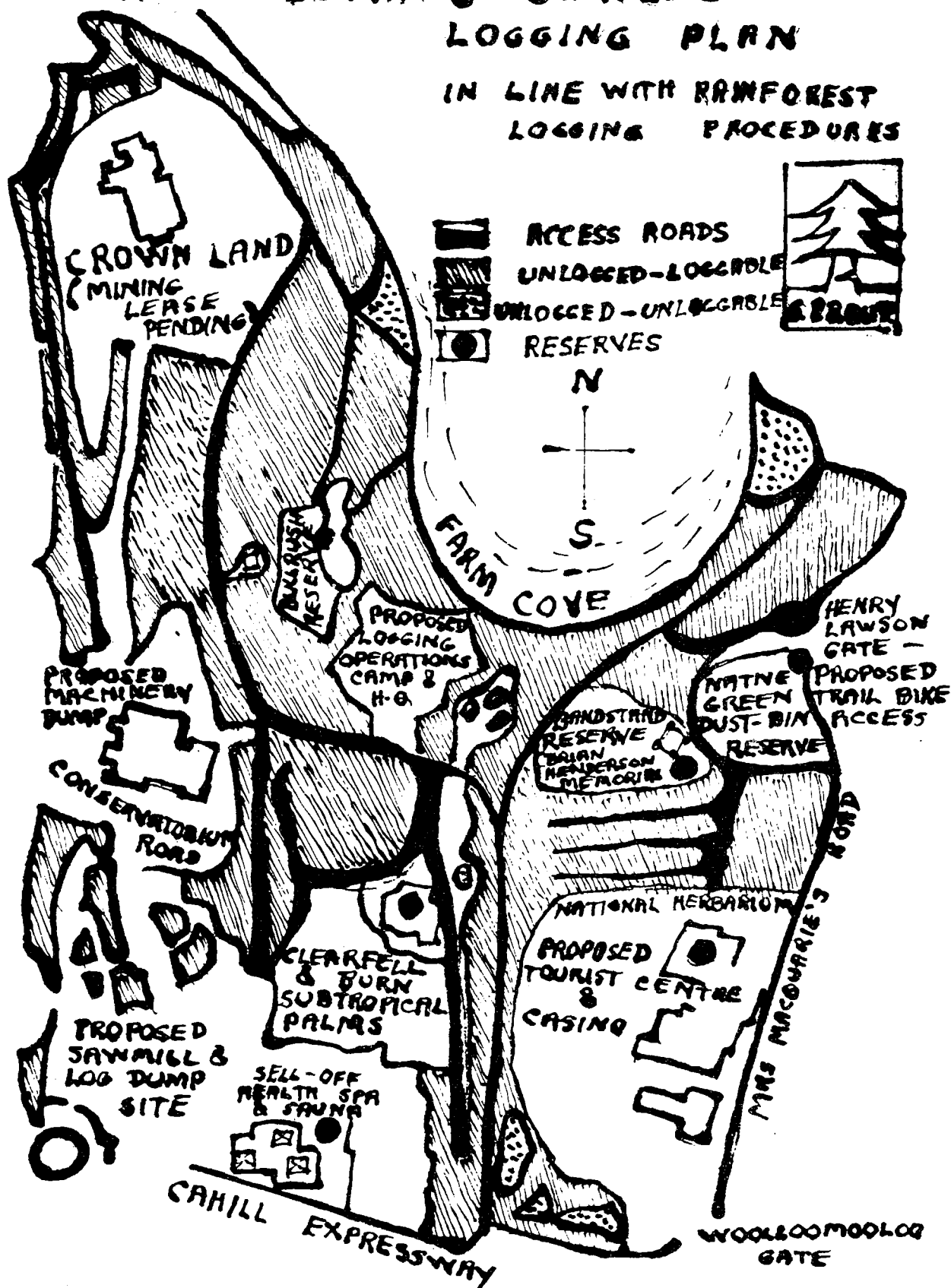
First the E.I.S.

Intensive, extensive and thorough research undertaken over the

# ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

## LOGGING PLAN

IN LINE WITH RAINFOREST  
LOGGING PROCEDURES





last week has proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that with the Botanic Gardens Management Area the 8 kilometres of logging road and snig-tracks, the 5 hectares of logging dumps and the logging camp will have no detrimental environmental impact. We have proved for example that grass will regenerate on logging dumps in 8-10 years and that lantana, a most attractive species, will clothe the area in all its glory in an even shorter time.

Logging will be strictly controlled in accordance with the selective logging procedures - that is, we'll select a tree then we'll log it.

We feel confident that in 40 years the ordinary person will not be able to tell that logging has taken place (well anyone who remembers what it was like with any luck will have shuffled off).

Now to Management -

Let it not be said that we do not respect the non-wood values of the gardens - adequate recreation areas will be set aside. Here - an excellent area quite pleasant for picnics and very handy to the toilet block. This lovely reserve will provide for panoramic views of the entire logging operation.

So there you have at last a responsible balanced sensible approach to a public resource. I'm sure you'll agree it's time we were rational about these matters and stopped rabbiting on about emotional things like ecology, national heritage even beauty!

So let's get on with the logging and hope that little SPROUTS will flourish and grow in every town in Australia! "

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#### SOCIAL NOTES FOR DECEMBER.

by Peter Miller.

Wednesday December 16: Christmas Party.

The Club will be open from 7.30 pm for this year's party. Please bring food suitably decorated for Christmas. It is advisable to bring a glass as the plastic ones provided never quite last out the evening. The Club will provide soft drink, beer and wine so anyone who would like to drink something stronger will have to bring it with them.

Bring your children to the party.

Can I have some volunteers to help carry drinks, set up the tables and clean up? Please phone me on 95,2689.

Wednesday December 23: Free Night.

As it is close to Christmas this evening has been left for Club members to make last minute arrangements for bushwalks over the holiday period.

Wednesday December 30: Clubroom closed.

Will the Club member who suggested showing a film on Cross-country Ski-ing please contact the Social Secretary - 95,2689.

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THE SKINK THAT CAME TO DINNER.

by Jim Brown.

Well, it was like this, you see. There weren't any notices saying "Please don't feed the lizards". And this skink was there. And I was having dinner....well, lunch.

Now I know that in some Wild Life Parks and Zoos they do try to discourage you from feeding the creatures. They say it not only fills them with food that has all the wrong vitamins, but it also un-mans them for finding their own natural tucker. That might be right, too, especially with the big flesh-eating animals. Look at the lions, for instance. After the Romans fed them all those Christians about 1800 years ago, I'll wager all the lions in Rome would have turned up their noses at their normal diet of Zulus or Bantus. And I suppose it wouldn't do to feed the Mountain Lions or Cougars of North America on exotic grub - why they may get a taste for Republicans instead of Democrats. I note that a Republican in the U.S.A. is a member of the ESTABLISHMENT - not a REVOLUTIONARY as he is here.

But all this really has nothing to do with the skink that came to dinner (or lunch) with me, and I only hope the friendly little chap won't perish miserably because he can't continue to get shortbread biscuits down in Uloola Brook.

It was a sultry day late in October, and about mid-day some bruised-looking clouds began to well up in the western sky. Not wishing to be swamped over lunch, I took myself off to a commodious overhang only a few minutes walk up Uloola Brook from the junction with Kangaroo Creek, and got a fire going. Almost immediately this skink emerged from a pile of broken rocks and fixed me with his beady lizard eyes. He was about 25 to 30 cm in length, and half of that was the tapering tail, and he was the usual coppery, shiny colour. Or was it a she-skink? Now I think about it, it was rather bulgy amidships. Are skinks viviparous? I'm not sure.

As I swamped down my first mug of tea, I had a sudden recollection of another lizard on another occasion mopping up some fallen breadcrumbs. By this time he (or she) had advanced to within a metre of me and was looking reproachfully at me. Presently I could stand its stare no longer, so fished out a shortbread biscuit and crumbled a corner of it on to the floor of the overhang about mid-way between us. It darted forward and picked up three or four of the larger crumbs - those about the size of a match-head.

Now a bright idea - take a slide of my biscuit-eating skink in action. I readied the camera, focussing on a smooth slab of rock about 40 cm distant, guessed at the correct exposure aperture and timing, and began to break up another brece of shortbread.

Reaching over slowly I started to sprinkle the crumbs when the lizard, now completely hooked on shortbread, whipped in and latched on to my index finger. It decided this wasn't edible and turned to the crumbs, greedily swallowing another three or four fragments. There was ample time to point the already cocked camera and shoot.

About this stage, remorse overtook me. No one could fairly deem



shortbread as the natural tucker for a bush lizard. Was I doing it an injury? It was still hovering only a metre or so distant and looked even bulgier in the middle. I became aware that a swarm of small, sticky flies were clustered on a fresh, open scratch on my shin, slapped at them and sent three of them, either dead or mortally wounded to the ground. Now there! I thought - that's proper skink food.

I picked up a couple of the disabled, but still fluttering flies and tossed them towards my lizard. One landed only a finger's breadth beyond its nose and kept on wriggling. The skink ignored them. With mounting concern, I despatched another fly, but the lizard was not to be tempted. Either (a) it doesn't like flies, or (b) it was too full of shortbread, or (c) I had spoiled its taste for its natural food.

I hope it is not (c).

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#### THE OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING.

by Barry Wallace.

It was around 2016 when the President, in the chair, belaboured the gong at some length and eventually brought order to the 30 or so members present, and got the meeting under way. There were no apologies so we went to new members. Of the three called only Geoff McInnes was present. Geoff Dowsett and David Cudworth must wait for another day.

The Minutes were read and received. The only matter arising was a reply from Federation that they do require police permission before engaging in a search for members of affiliated clubs.

Correspondence brought letters from Jeff Rigby advising change of address, from the A.C.F. expressing concern about the future of the Great Barrier Reef, from Andy Turner providing notes on his survey of recreational usage of National Parks, from the Walking Club of Victoria asking that they receive copies of our club magazine, advice that Jim Callaway has been appointed to the Heathcote National Park Advisory Committee and outgoing letters to the three new members. There were no significant matters arising.

Then it was on to the reports! First came the Treasurer to regale us with tales of monetary splendour. It seems that we began the month with \$1684.85, spent \$190.07, acquired \$49.00 and ended up with \$1543.78. The Coolana Account had a closing balance of \$405.50.

The Federation Report indicated that S. & R. section have commented on the recent incident at Margaret Falls involving a fatality, that the E.C. of N.S.W. have withdrawn the Birds Rock Colliery E.I.S. for further review (it should be available again next year) and Federation have received a letter of complaint from a farmer in the A.C.T. alleging that "bushwalkers" have offended against him in a number of ways. Federation will contact him for further information.

The Walks Reports began, as is becoming traditional nowadays, with a couple of non-reports. First there was Alan Pike's modified Three Peaks trip of 11,12,13 September - - no report, but it did go, then Gordon Lee's Three Peaks trip - - no report. Jim Percy reported 10 starters, two of

whom were prospectives, on his Kanangra Walls to optional Cloudmaker walk having perfect weather that same weekend. Of the two Sunday walks, Jim Brown had 12 members, 6 prospectives, 3 visitors and lots of wildflowers on his Glenbrook area walk. (It is unclear whether the programmed Wild Flowers walk is at variance with the actual walk or not.) Peter Dyce, on the other hand, reported nothing wild about his Bundeena to Otford trip despite the attendance of 21 people.

We seem to have had our fair share of wet weekends lately, and the 18,19,20 September was one of them. We had Bill Capon sharing the rain in the Budawangs with 6 starters and Sheila Binns with her 4 members and two prospectives catching the 1500 train after her Waterfall to Audley wade. David Ingram reported only light rain up to lunch time for the 23 members and two prospectives who turned out for his Point Clare to Wondabyne walk, and Jim Vatiliotis' Kanangra walk that weekend did not go!?

The weekend of 25,26,27 saw Don Finch leading 5 starters on his Colo River trip which was described as "two half day walks" and back at the cars by 1430 Sunday (one wonders what happened to the ++ marking on the programme). Tony Marshall had 4 people on his Kanangra, Kowmung walk, reporting wind and sleet on the final leg across Kanangra tops to the cars on Sunday afternoon.

Ian Debert's Springwood to Blaxland day trip attracted 15 starters and the other day walk, Peter Christian's Bundeena to Bundeena via Gibbon Head fishing trip had 6 members, 4 visitors and 4 prospectives but no reported fish.

The October long weekend, 2,3,4,5, October saw Bill Capon lead 5 people on his Ettrema Creek walk and Spiro Hajinakitas leading a slightly shaken crew of 2 prospectives, 2 visitors and 14 members across to Butchers Creek. It seems that at about 0200 Saturday morning a significant portion of a nearby large tree gave way to the prevailing winds and crashed noisily, and with some violence, between Spiro's car and Jeff Rigby's tent. Spiro reported no problems getting everyone up later that morning to leave the camp site.

Things were somewhat quieter for Guy Vinden on his Jenolan River trip that same weekend. He reported 4 members, one visitor, profuse birdlife, and not much water in the Jenolan. There were no day walks programmed for that weekend.

The following weekend, 9,10,11 October we had Ian Debert with two prospectives and 11 members, fresh (?) from the Federation Ball treading their fragile and somnambulant way backwards along his Galong Creek, Cox River, Breakfast Creek, Carlon's Farm walk. (No, Virginia, they didn't really walk backwards, they just reversed the trip. There is something about pink granite, waterfalls and hangovers that isn't quite right.)

Bob Younger had 10 members and two prospectives on his Saturday start 10,11 October walk from Bundeena to Otford and Gordon Lee reported 4 bods at the rockclimbing part of his instructional weekend. Jim Brown led what was described as a "jolly party" of 17 persons through cloud and drizzle to complete his Otford to Waterfall day test walk, and Peter Miller had his 7 starters for the Mt. Hay to Bluegum and return sprint arriving back at the cars at 2100. One must agree that this sort of thing makes a fitting finale

to the walks reports, although I doubt Peter thought of it that way at the time.

General Business saw the unanimous passage of a proposal that the Club write to Bill Hall, recently retired from the Heathcote National Park Advisory Committee, thanking him for his period of service on that committee on behalf of the Club. Bill first became a member of this body when it was a State Park Trust back in 1944 and has served continuously since then, with a stint as President from 1970 to 1977. Congratulations and thanks, Bill.

Announcements were routine except for Marcia Shappert's call for starters for a trek to Sikkim in Bhutan during May 1982 (7th to 27th to be exact). Any takers?

The President then closed the meeting at 2054.

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#### HISTORIC WOODFORD-LINDEN, WITH NANCYE ALDERSON.

by Wal Liddle.

Fifteen bushwalkers alighted from the train at Woodford, in the Blue Mountains, at 11.10 am Saturday morning.

Nancye then took us to the 'OLD WOODFORD ACADEMY', a collection of stone convict buildings on the Great Western Highway. The main building consists of two single storey joined sections at the front (complete with worn flagstone verandahs) and two other structures at the rear. The rear buildings which run at right angles to the front structure consist of a two storey section on one side of an open courtyard and a single storey section on the other side.

We were then introduced to Miss MacNamee, a spry lady of 85 years who told us about the Academy.

The first section of the premises was built in 1920, the second in 1845, and the third in 1867, and has been used as an Inn, a post of the Military, a 'Gold Rush' office, and a Scholastic academy. Apparently it was a favourite staging post for the coaches going to Bathurst and the gold fields.

The party then inspected the rear courtyard where the original well and pump complete with handle were still in position. Miss MacNamee said that the single storey building opposite the well had been the stables and out-buildings associated with the horses whilst the two storey building on the other side had been used as a dwelling and by the scholastic academy. A barred window was observed in the bottom storey of the two storey section. Miss MacNamee indicated that it had been a storeroom but could have been used for the storage of gold.

We then went inside the front single storey building via the hall. The hall was painted in an 'old world' cream colour, complete with a curved and embellished arch at the midway point. The hall was hung with photos and paintings of an age long since passed, i.e. knights in armour with their lady loves and mementoes of the 1914-1918 war. The windows at the rear of the hall consist of the original blue and red side lights, complete with glass etched designs.

The party then entered the lounge room which appeared to be in its original condition, i.e. the timber ceiling was painted in a dark mid-green colour and the peeling wallpaper was the original 1876 material. Miss Macnamee pointed out an elaborate moulded cedar bookcase which she said had belonged to one of the inhabitants, namely the Fairfaxes. The room was full of furniture and bookcases dating back to the late 1800's and early 1900's. The books in the bookcase dated back to that period, i.e. "Scott's Expedition to the Antarctic".

The timber floor in this room was rather shaky. Miss Macnamee indicated that for years her father (the Principal of the Woodford Academy) and herself had done the repairs for all the building, but that because of her advanced age she had not been able to keep up with the necessary repairs. She intimated that the National Trust had taken over this responsibility.

We then inspected the front verandah where some of the timber posts, the 'ogee' shape iron gutter, and some of the colonial window sashes in the front wall had been replaced.

In the course of the inspection we met Jan Perress (the nurse looking after Miss Macnamee) who told us that her sister Christine had been a member of the S.B.W.

From the Academy, the party proceeded to the other side of the Railway Line, along the Historic Bathurst Road, some of which is still a dirt surface. One could actually visualize 'history being destroyed' because of the numbers of young people answering the 'vacant lot' land sale ads on either side of the road.

We followed the old Bathurst Road, past two beautiful convict built houses complete with pitched roofs, old fashioned stone chimneys, verandahs complete with iron filagree 'lacework', and two stone outdoor privies (toilets). A number of the party were told to "Buzz off" by the present migrant owner of one of the properties.

From here the party crossed the Great Western Highway and entered a much used Rest Area, with a significant historical background. The rest area, a clearing off the road, was just below the two convict built homes already described. A sign stated:-

20 MILE HOLLOW - STOCK RESERVE, Lieutenant BOWEN 1829.

Convict Camp for repair of Bathurst Road.

Captain Bull in charge of 50 soldiers and 80 convicts

here November, 1842 - lived in stone house (above clearing)  
till 1844.

We then sighted another sign pointing to a "Convict Cell", but Nancye indicated that the hollowed out rock had probably only been a powder magazine (depository) for the rock quarry below.

After lunch the party proceeded to Cayley's Repulse (a pile of stones near the Old Western Highway) purported to be the termination of explorer Cayley's last attempt to find a way over the Blue Mountains.

We then visited an old grave just off the road above King's Cave, Linden. Apparently an early traveller died on a journey and was buried at that very spot. King's Cave is a very large cave that sheltered

hundreds of mounted soldiers in its time, hence the name 'King's'.

Finally we trudged past Martin's Folly, a large stone house in Martin's Road, Faulconbridge. The house originally had been set in large grounds and was part of a vast estate owned by Sir. James Martin, the Premier of New South Wales. Sadly the grounds have been reduced by the railway line in front and a public road at the back. An extensive semi-circular drive sweeps up to the front of the house, which has verandahs on three sides. The roofs to the verandahs are curved and are painted a beautiful mid-green colour, the same as the pitched main roof. The house is set in beautiful grounds bedecked with green lawns and English style flowering gardens, complete with a 'picture book' rustic well in the front.

Nancye then told us some of the history of the house -

It was called 'Martin's Folly' because Sir James started the construction whilst his wife was overseas in England. It was to be a large lavish house on a grand scale, built as a surprise, but with some of his wife's money. On returning from England, Lady Martin temporarily halted the construction because she disagreed with the extreme lavishness of the plans, i.e. 14 bedrooms to house the children of the marriage. Eventually the house was finished but not on such a grand scale.

NOTE: Further historical details can be obtained from the book 'Historic Woodford and Linden', by Alan E. Searle. Obtainable from J. Maddock, Springwood Historical Society, 29 Flora Bella Street, Warrimoo. 2775. \$4.00 plus 55c postage.

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### THE JOY OF ? ? ? ?

by Jim Brown.

On the night of the Club's Auction, the first item offered by Charlie Brown was a book.

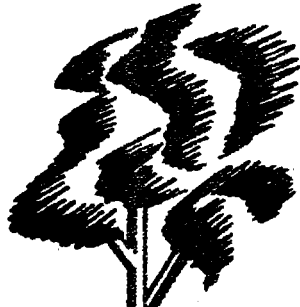
Kath said to me "What is it?"

Now, I'm a bit like the ancient golfer in the story, who admitted he was not the man he used to be, except that he thought his memory was failing, while I know it's my eyes and ears. Looking at the book that Charlie was brandishing, I said "I think it's called 'The Joy of Sex'".

And I would have kept on thinking that, except that next day I saw a large advertising hoarding with an illustration of a car and a caption which also appeared to read "The Joy of Sex". Next time I saw it I looked carefully, and found it was an advertisement for the latest Holden Commodore, and actually read "The Joy of SL/X", which is apparently the code for that model.

Bearing in mind that Charlie dragooned a member at the auction into buying a catalogue of "S.K.F. Ball Bearings", I am now in doubt about that book. If, indeed, it was a service manual for the latest Holden car, then the buyer got himself a genuine bargain. In any case, I wish him much JOY of his purchase.

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# eastwood camping centre

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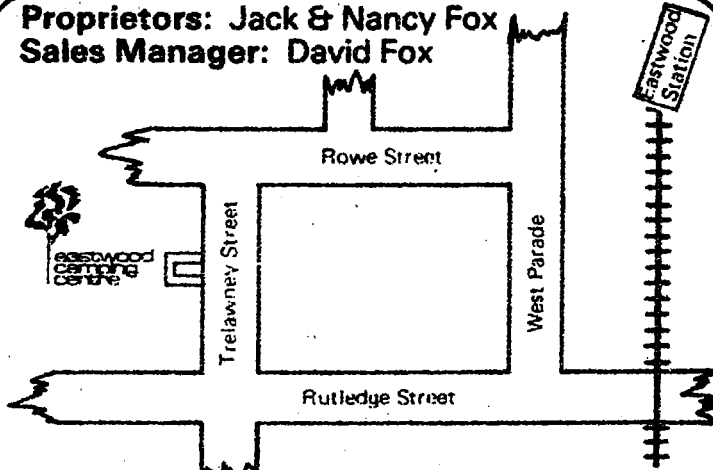
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ONE MORE LETTER TO THE EDITOR.

There is something stirring, something strange afoot occurring with each magazine, for instead of interesting articles concerning walks that we know are happening every weekend, there is always a letter to the Editor about some subject that has nothing to do with bushwalking, and here let me say that, although I find them never dull, for I admit there are lots and lots of subjects that I know nothing about and some subjects that I wouldn't want to know about, I find them intriguing to say the least; and one of the most intriguing statements made in the last few months was by "Observer" on Dot Butler's half-century party, in particular the statement that the Queen of Sheba had hairy legs, and I have been waiting for the Bible experts to pounce on this snippet, but alas, nothing has appeared and so it behoves me to take up the matter.

If you look up 1 KINGS X, 1-10, 13, it encompasses the entire story (although it is repeated verbatim later on in Chronicles IX, 1-9, 12) and nowhere does it state Sheba's hirsuteness. Search in vain the revised, unrevised, Catholic, Jewish Bibles and you are left with the Koran. And there I shall start. Technically Sura 27, 17-45, and I recommend all serious students to rush out and read it. The Arab commentaries give the queen's name as Bilkis which is possibly connected with the Hebrew "pillegesh" meaning "concubine". It seems evil genii trying to prevent King Solomon marrying such a hussy drew attention to her hairy legs. To check on this he had a palace built with a mirrored floor, and when their information proved correct he ordered them to bring forth a depilatory (Nurah: a paste of unslaked lime and arsenic) to remove the hair, which proved she was a wicked genii herself, as the bodies of all evil ones have their bodies covered with hair. The commentaries go on about how he had previously stolen her throne and when she arrived in Jerusalem he tried to disguise it, etc... It goes on in this vein and is a pile of hogwash and I hope the Ayatollah Khomeini doesn't read this because I'm sure he won't fiddle around suing me!

But where do the Arab commentaries get their ideas from, you are surely asking, and I must breathlessly inform you, from the Midrash, which are Jewish commentaries, and so we go and search the Second Targum to Esther (Targum Sheni: 1,3) and here we find a very different story indeed. He wrote to her in Sheba asking her to come for a visit - "and if you don't, the demons will throttle you in your bed at night, while the beasts will slay you in the field and the birds will consume your flesh" - and obviously taken by such an invitation, she arrived at Jerusalem after many ridiculous adventures, with 6000 youths all dressed in purple, all of whom had been born at the same hour, identical height and even looked alike. (Maybe she was from outer space with all her clones.) Anyway, she was taken to Solomon who had taken up residence for the audience in a palace of glass, its floor was so polished that it was shining like a mirror. In fact, its reflection created the illusion of water, and the Queen, imagining that he was sitting on his throne in a pool of water lifted the hem of her dress, thereby uncovering her legs. Solomon being an observant bod as well as being terribly undiplomatic and ungallant, on seeing her hairy legs remarked "Your beauty is that of a woman but your hair is that of a man. Hair adorns a man but disfigures a woman." Thus ends our interest in the story which then goes on to her testing King Solomon's wisdom with riddles and conundrums etc., such as "What comes from the earth like dust, is poured out like water, and lights the house?" ANSWER: Naptha.

Let us conclude with the Bible account with its beautiful English. Yes, Virginia, God wrote in English. Solomon in return "gave the Queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked for" he gladly complied with. And all this "in addition to what he gave her of his royal bounty", which for the uneducated is the polite way for saying she left him pregnant. Thus farewell to the Queen of Sheba, who then left and went back to (a) Egypt. She being no other person than Queen Hatshepsut. (b) Arabia. At Aden you can see her Wells, and ancient Assyrian tablets tell of the Queens of Arabia. (c) Ceylon. She arrived with peacocks in Jerusalem. Wherever Sheba was it was a land "whose dust was more precious than gold and whose silver was like dirt in the streets. Its trees dated from the days of the creation and its waters came from Paradise".

Hoping this is of interest to some of your readers. OWEN MARKS.

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#### WOLLEMI NATIONAL PARK.

In December 1979 the Wollemi National Park was gazetted. The park includes the largest wilderness area in New South Wales, the Colo Wilderness. At the south-western edge of the park lies the Newnes Plateau, an elevated area which form the head catchment of a number of tributaries of the pristine Colo River. The Plateau is important not only as a buffer for the Colo Wilderness, but also in itself as a habitat for a number of rare plants and animal species.

THREATS: Coal Mine Development: Bird's Rock Colliery, controlled by the Electricity Commission and others are planned for the Plateau.

Sand Quarrying: Three quarries operate at present and more are likely.

Pine Plantations: The Forestry Commission plans to increase the area planted on the Plateau.

Infrastructure for these developments include a railway line, roads and power lines.

All these developments have the potential to seriously threaten the integrity of the Colo Wilderness. Sand and coal mining operations have already led to the pollution of Wollangambe Creek. The developments threaten the Colo River itself.

#### WHAT SHOULD BE DONE:

A land use plan for the Newnes Plateau should be drawn up to lay down guidelines for development. This can be done under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. The National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Parks Association, Total Environment Centre and Federation of Bushwalking Clubs in their submissions to the Bird's Rock Colliery E.I.S. have all called for a Regional Plan. A public inquiry is to be held into the Colliery itself.

PLEASE WRITE to the Minister for Planning and Environment requesting that he direct that a REGIONAL PLAN FOR NEWNES PLATEAU be drawn up prior to approval of any development on the Newnes Plateau.

ROGER LEMBIT. Conservation Director,  
Federation of Bushwalking Clubs N.S.W.

ALL S.B.W. MEMBERS are urged to make similar representations.

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