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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 Cahill Community Centre (Upper Hall), 34 Falcon Street, Crow's Nest. Enquiries concerning the Club should be referred to Ann Ravn, telephone 798-8607.

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EDITOR: Evelyn Walker, 158 Evans Street, Rozelle, 2039.  
Telephone 827-3695.

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

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Helen Gray.

TYPIST: Kath Brown.

DUPLICATOR OPERATOR: Phil Butt.

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THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY OF BLUE GUM FOREST.

by Jim Brown.

On September 2nd, 1932, the Government Gazette proclaimed an area of 40 acres on the northern bank of the Grose River, opposite the junction of Govett's Leap Creek, as a Reserve for Public Recreation. This reservation had been achieved mainly through the efforts of members of walking clubs in Sydney, and the story is told in the 1940 edition of "The Bushwalker", a journal then published annually by the N.S.W. Federation of Bush Walking Clubs. The authorship of the article is not given, but the manner of telling strongly suggests it was written by one of the people directly involved.

In this year, when the 50th Anniversary of the reservation of Blue Gum Forest is being celebrated, it seems proper to reprint a large extract from the article, bearing in mind that these events in 1931-32 probably marked a watershed in the conservation concepts of bush walkers.

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"In 1931 two farmers seeking more grass secured Conditional Purchases in the Grose Valley. They at once set to work to make a track by which they could take their cattle from the Bell Road down past the mighty cliffs into the valley. The Grose River flows through a deep gash in the plateau and grazing flats along the river are virtually non-existent; but one landholder knew of a flat area, at the junction of Govett's Leap Creek with the River - the Blue Gum Forest. That was where he intended to graze his cattle and grow walnuts, so he set off to ringbark the blue gums, but had not much more than started the work of destruction when he was halted by a party of bush walkers consisting of members of two of the small clubs which then existed in Sydney.

"At that time the Mountain Trails Club had 27 members, the Sydney Bush Walkers about 140, none of them wealthy, and the depression was at its worst. Things looked very gloomy as the only way Mr. Hungerford, the grazier, could be persuaded to spare the trees was by a cash payment of £130 within three months to buy him out. He had, however, agreed to refrain from ring-barking any more trees until the walkers had had an opportunity of explaining the position to their clubs and reported back to him whether or not arrangements could be made to purchase the land.

"As soon as they returned to town, the walkers got busy and a committee was formed of members of both clubs. The Wild Life Preservation Society was approached and gave £25 to pay a deposit; its President was added to the committee, and he later became the Chairman of the Trust. Club members and committeemen alike gave and obtained donations, and raised money by various means. Somehow or other the trees had to be saved.

"Another meeting with Mr. Hungerford took place in the Forest on November 15, 1931, while thunder rolled and rain poured down. Myles Dunphy and Alan Rigby of the M.T.C., Joe Turner and Noel Griffith of the S.B.W., Roy Bennett of the W.L.P.S., and Mr. Hungerford the grazier squatted on their haunches in a circle under the trees and talked business. Watching them, two visitors crouched in Rigby's small lean-to tent, and Mr. J.G. Lockley ('Redgum' of the Sydney Morning Herald) and Dorothy Lawry, who had driven some of the party to the start of the track from the Bell Road, sheltered in a hollow at the base of a huge fallen blue gum.

"When the storm had passed and the party broke up - some to go back to the Bell Road and the cars, others to walk through to Govett's Leap - the price was still £130, and the time for payment within three months. That afternoon Mr. Lockley commented on the "pylon" which now bears his name, and when he got back to Sydney the "Herald" gave the Blue Gum Forest and the walkers' efforts to save it a lot of splendid publicity.

"With this additional help the committee renewed its efforts, and sent out a fresh batch of appeals to various citizens who might be persuaded to contribute some of that rare commodity - cash. Time was getting short, and the funds in hand only totalled £50 when one of these appeals reached Mr. W.J. Cleary, then Commissioner for Railways (and himself a free-lance walker). He took time to consider the appeal carefully, and then anonymously lent the committee the remaining £80 free of interest for two years - not expecting to see it again, as he explained when it was repaid on December 1st, 1933.

"Mr. Hungerford was paid the sum of £130, and he transferred his holding to the tree lovers, who handed it back to the Crown. The Government Gazette of 2nd September proclaimed the Reserve, and a subsequent issue of December 2nd, 1932, notified the appointment of four trustees - Roy Bennett (W.L.P.S.), Alan Rigby (M.T.C.) and Joe Turner and Dorothy Lawry (S.B.W.). In 1935 Alan Rigby resigned, and Maurie Berry was appointed in his place, with Mr. W.J. Cleary also being appointed as a fifth Trustee.

"The years 1932 and 1933 were busy ones for Bushwalkers and Trailers. Not only were they raising money by various entertainments so that the debt on the Forest could be paid, but they were working for Garrawarra Park (Burning Palms) and forming the N.S.W. Federation of Bush Walking Clubs. There had been several previous unsuccessful attempts to form a Federation, but the tremendous effort needed to secure a small area of 40 acres showed club members the necessity for uniting all clubs so that other larger areas could be saved in their natural state for posterity..... Spurred by their ardent desire to protect their beloved bushlands, the federationists succeeded in 1932 in forming the N.S.W. Federation of Bush Walking Clubs.

"Another result of the purchase and dedication of the Forest was the reservation of a strip 300 ft wide on each side of Govett's Leap Creek from the junction with the Grose River up the river to Blackheath Creek, and for some distance up that creek. This was vested in the local municipal and shire councils."

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The article in the Federation "Bushwalker" does not mention that the equally attractive river flat on the south-western corner of the Grose River/Govett's Leap Creek Junction (at the foot of the descent from Perry's Lookdown) was never a part of the Reserve. In subsequent years it was privately owned by a member of the Hordern family (the Sydney retail merchants) and was often called the "Hordern Pavilion". During the 1950s the Blue Gum Forest Trust made several approaches to the owner, proposing that he either sell or donate his block, and offering to have one of the existing Trustees stand down to allow his appointment if he so desired to the Trust. These proposals were courteously but firmly declined.

Blue Gum Forest was also the scene of several large-scale working bees,

particularly after floods in the winters of 1951 and 1952 brought down some river-side trees which tended to divert the flow into other channels and cause further bank erosion. In April 1953 a determined bid was made to clear the obstructions by blasting the fallen trees and building groynes of timber and rocks to form a "silt-pack". This was attended by between 30 and 40 S.B.W. members. At a follow-up weekend in May 1955 almost 50 members were present for a combined "Working Bee - Corroboree (camp-fire) - Instructional Weekend" and two Scouting parties also in the Forest that weekend gave useful assistance. Unfortunately, the winter floods of 1955 destroyed a lot of the good work, but I believe some lasting benefits were obtained in keeping the Grose to a fairly central channel in the Blue Gum Forest area.

With the establishment in the 1960s of the Blue Mountains National Park, the Trust was asked to transfer its control of the Forest to the State Authorities. As this was in line with the walkers' desires, and as plans were being developed for a National Parks Act and the creation of a Parks and Wild Life Service, the Trust willingly complied.

Earlier I suggested the preservation of Blue Gum Forest was a watershed in bush walkers' attitudes to conservation. I often wonder whether there was any precedent in N.S.W. (in Australia? in the world?) for a group of conservationists to put their wallets where their hearts lay - to BUY a vital piece of land to save it from development or destruction. Was this the first actual implementation of an idea that later led to the purchase by S.B.W. of Portion 7 at Era - and when that was resumed, to the attempt in 1964 to buy land at Bendethera, and later still at Coolana? The purchase of land to preserve a lovely place is not a novel idea nowadays.... but I think it may have been in 1932.

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#### OBITUARY - CHARLES KILPATRICK.

It has been reported that Honorary Member Charlie Kilpatrick, the first Secretary of the S.B.W., and a member of the Mountain Trails Club, died on 9th August, aged 78.

Kilpatrick Causeway, leading from Kanangra Walls to Craft's Walls, bears his name.

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#### SOCIAL NOTES FOR OCTOBER.

by Jo Van Sommers.

\* October 20th: Ray Goth from World Vision will give an audio-visual presentation of the work of this organisation in Third World countries.

October 27th: Another rare chance to see Frank Taeker's remarkable collection of nature slides.

\* DINNER before the meeting at the Malaya Restaurant, 73 Mount Street, North Sydney, within walking distance of North Sydney station. Malayan, Chinese, and Indonesian dishes, licensed. Meet at 6.30 pm.

Bushwalkers Ball - September 24th - Lane Cove Town Hall - \$6 single B.Y.O. also bring a plate - Contact Barbara Bruce 546 6570 (H) or Denise Shaw 922 6093 (H) for further details. Join the Club party.

OBITUARY - RAY KIRKBY.

by Alex Colley.

Few members have contributed more to the spirit of good humour and companionship which have made the Club what it is than Ray Kirkby, who died from a heart attack on August 31st after a short illness.

Although afflicted by an ankle injury, incurred in his babyhood, and often painful, Ray joined the Club in the early 'forties and became one of its most active members, always keen to explore new country. He led some of the earliest trips into the Budawangs, and the first S.B.W. trips to the Western Macpherson Range and the Hastings River, as well as many well attended programme walks.

Ray was Editor of the Magazine in 1948, Social Secretary for a time, and a member of the Committee, but it is probably for his very original humour that he will be remembered. I can well recall when Neil Schaefer came before the Committee as a prospective, adorned by a bushy beard. After the usual questions Ray asked "And tell me, does your beard impede you in thick scrub?". He was the author and producer of the Club's first camp fire opera - the drama of Dorman Long pleading in court his innocence of a charge of fare evasion on a tram - and articles such as "Five Returns Dulbolla, please", "Lavender and Old Accounts", and "Christmas - a Loathsome Time".

Ray married a fellow club member, Jean Thirgood, bought a block of land at Castlecrag, and after manually removing several hundred tons of rock, built a lovely home there. In later years the urge to explore took them to places such as Afghanistan, North Africa and the Middle East, North and South America and New Zealand, but Ray continued to be an active walker, often in the company of daughter Christine and husband Craig, and latterly with baby Dane too.

He joined the Dungalla Club and contributed to its activities much as he had in the S.B.W. He was President and Social Secretary for a time, organised and led many outings, wrote for the "Dungalloper" and provided camp fire entertainment.

Ray will be sadly missed by all who knew him, but he leaves lovely memories. Our deepest sympathy to Jean, Christine and Craig.

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HANDY HINTS FOR SWITZERLAND.

by Owen Marks.

Having just returned from a four-weeks holiday in Switzerland, I feel that the following information may be of interest to those who would like to visit this beautiful country but are put off by the rumours of it being too expensive. I found it just the opposite. Quite cheap in fact, but you must be very sensible and at times parsimonious. Here's what you can do:-

Buy a 4-week Swiss Pass for \$140 the minute you enter Swiss territory. From then on all trains (government or private), country buses, boats (river and lake) and the occasional cable car are at your disposal. The cost amounts to less than \$5 per day.

Food in supermarkets is certainly cheaper than Australia, but only if you buy sensibly and change your diet radically, of course. Cafeterias in department stores are less than Sydney prices and cleaner too, I might add. Ordinary restaurants overlooking stupendous views can be pricy, but all eating establishments have menus outside and you can judge for yourself.

The Swiss Pass works in two Italian valleys that jut into Switzerland, and you can stock up with cheap Italian tucker whilst passing from one Swiss Canton to the other. The Swiss do it, in grand style, so the humble tourist need not be fazed.

Accommodation is also no problem. There are youth hostels that take any age sprinkled all over the place from little chalets with cows underneath (Gimmelwald) to converted Hapsburg castles (Brug - added interest is that it was built on the camp of the Vth Roman Legion). The price varies from \$3 to \$5 per night and there are some which have no curfew and hardly any visitors between seasons either. In nearly every village you see signs "Rooms" in four languages, and prices are approximately \$10 or \$11. (Once again you can stay in Italy for \$7 a double.) If you like you can stay in posh hotels in Zurich for \$80 - I don't know what they are like inside but they should at least be clean.

That disposes of TRANSPORT, FOOD & ACCOMMODATION.

**WHEN** to go? Obviously if you are a ski-nut, winter is perfect. If you like walking down passes with wildflowers underfoot and cow bells up the valleys, summer is what you need. In autumn and spring when the locals don't travel is the best. Spring is ideal - still freezing at night and days go up to 15 to 18 degrees but this has its advantages. Every house has to be heated throughout and that means either a boiler room or hot water radiators everywhere. (Swiss money means everyone can afford it, has to have it and can't survive without it.) Following on, you can wash your clothes at night and they are always dry at dawn. Every train, bus, waiting room, even public toilets are heated. Yet in summer, if there is a cold snap, nothing is switched on. "We Swiss are tough", so I was told.

**WHERE** to go? You can travel forever. Mountains along the southern border with plains stretching to the Rhine River covered with medieval towns, snow-white villages and the modern cities. There are lakes everywhere with white swans gliding everywhere and the rivers are always crystal clear. My favourite spot was south of Interlaken in a valley underneath the Jungfrau

with villages like Murren, Wengen, Gimmelwald all with no motor cars, with incredible views and all accessible with cog trains or by aerial gondolas. ALL FREE, once you have your Swiss Pass.

LANGUAGE PROBLEM? None! Everybody speaks a smattering of German, Italian or French. Anyway you can always find somebody that speaks English, like in cuckoo clock shops or railway stations.

#### BEWARE OF.....

1. Railway conductors who make you close the windows even though the carriage is 40 deg and full of smoking skiers.
2. Getting accommodation in chocolate box chalets. Your room is at the top and the toilets are on the ground floor with 8 flights of stairs. Wooden, that creak and groan at each footstep. It's the other guests that wake you.
3. Banks that charge \$3 for doing a little transaction. It's fun to see a mini computer attached by cable to the bank's central nervous system. You punch in your secret Swiss account number and out pops Swiss francs. Don't try my telephone number, my age and passport number - 30-1827-47-106306. You get a blinking light.
4. The railway station at Realp. They have a parka-chewing German shepherd. Look the restaurant owner in the face and repeat "Versicherung" over and over. All Swiss dog owners have a compulsory insurance scheme for such occasions.
5. Groups of larrikin Swiss teenagers. They flick cigarette ends at you if you should look askance at their purple hair or safety pins in their ears.
6. Becoming a nutcase on punctuality. Some trains leave 5 seconds late but on one occasion at Montreux the Geneva Express was 2 minutes late and when announced the whole platform went "ooh". I framed a letter in my mind to the President of the Federation.
7. Of buying a house. Nothing under \$250,000, and for goodness sake don't build. You have to have an atom bomb proof shelter in the basement.
8. The art gallery in Zurich. Woeful. Zurich also houses a huge Museum of Transport, but it is only fit for children.

This article is dedicated to Margaret Reid, for without her encouragement, this would not have been written.

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#### BUSHWALKER RECIPE No.5

by Jill Cahn.

#### Bran and Apricot Loaf.

- 1 cup chopped dried apricots
- 1 cup All-bran
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup boiling water

Place in basin and soak overnight.  
Add  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups S.R. Flour, pinch salt, teaspoon vanilla. Bake in greased loaf tin, moderate oven - 30 minutes.

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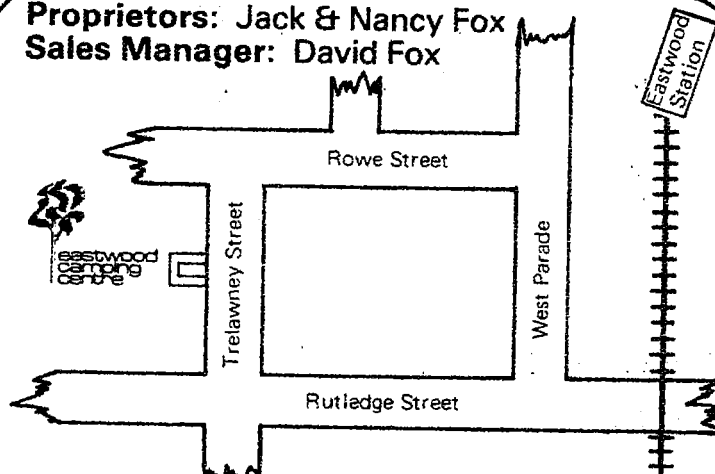
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THE THIRD WALK.

by Bill Gamble.

(This completes the walks reports of seven members in the Dart-Rees, Routeburn and Nelson Lakes areas of New Zealand's South Island, between 12 March and 12 April, 1982. Accounts of the first and second walks were contributed by John Newman and Keith Docherty in the July and August issues of the magazine.)

Climatically, Nelson Lakes National Park generally offers the best prospects of fine weather but this did not happen with us. The fine days which had followed us throughout our two and a half weeks in the Southern Lakes district left us to a cold change that dumped much snow on the tops and thwarted our plan to walk to the high level hut at Lake Angelus and down Robert Ridge to Park Headquarters at St. Arnaud.

After a damp night tenting in the campground at West Bay near Park Headquarters, we started our third walk along the eastern side of Lake Rotoiti on Saturday, 3 April 1982, headed for a lunch-stop at the Lake Head Hut, and an overnight stop at John Tait Hut in the mid-Travers Valley. Lorraine Bloomfield, Joy Hynes and Ian Debert were away by 9.15 am, while John Newman and Keith Docherty waited for Stan Madden and Bill Gamble to park the mini-bus back at the campground, near to where the walk was planned to end, and return on foot. At noon everyone had gathered at Lake Head Hut for lunch in overcast weather. A cracking pace had been set along the lake's edge which was not sustained in the afternoon.

After lunch, the party crossed the dry bed of the Travers River (near the mouth the water went underground due to its low level - by N.Z. standards that is) and walked up the centre of the valley through long, dry grass, eventually joining the track on the west side of the valley. The last couple of hours of walking were slow, reflecting a party which had burnt itself out early by too fast a pace. For all, there was a weary arrival at John Tait Hut; for some aching feet, and unfortunately for Lorraine, a recurrence of the blisters sustained on the first walk in the Dart-Rees area of Mount Aspiring National Park which would prevent her going on.

John Tait Hut, with its smoking stove and inability to warm, was our base for a day and another night. Our companions were two energetic New Zealanders tramping and climbing their way through the Park. Their climbs of Mt. Hopeless, 7475 feet, and Mt. Travers, 7671 feet, without ropes or aids of any kind left us a little breathless, as we contemplated jagged edges of rock rising 5000 feet above the valley floor.

Our efforts in the Cupola Basin nearby on the following day included inadvertently locking Keith in the hut on the bushline so that he had to climb out a window, and an energetic scramble on snowgrass and scree slopes up to a steep saddle which gave brief views down into the Sabine Valley. The briefness of the views reflected misty, cold conditions and snow flurries. Stan, Keith and Bill made the views at the saddle, Ian missed by five minutes, and John and Joy stayed about 3-400 feet down the scree and sheltered from the weather. We all returned to the hut for lunch, took a last look at the magnificent cirque of peaks at the head of the basin and then plunged down the track to join Lorraine at John Tait Hut.

The next day dawned clear and cold and there was much anticipation in the planned walk over the Travers Saddle to the Sabine Forks, a long day in which 3300 feet would be gained and 3700 feet lost.

The party, without Lorraine who stayed at John Tait Hut, reached Upper Travers Hut for an early lunch, after an idyllic walk along the upper reaches of the Travers River. The location of the hut amid fine mountain scenery and its proximity to a number of good scrambles to nearby passes made one wish for more time in the area. We were soon pushing on into the upper basin of the Travers. The warmth of the sun was quickly chilled as we mounted the pass and met a cool breeze from the south - the portent of another weather change the following day which would bring a good sprinkling of snow to the tops.

We were all impressed by the steepness of the descent on the Sabine side of the saddle. The plunge down the edge of a scree tongue to the valley floor pained the toes and reduced knees to jelly. The saving grace was the clarity and immensity of the mountains around us and how insignificant we were in this landscape. There was another hour of forest walking before the huts at Sabine Forks were reached in a final 'knee-shattering' descent of about 500 ft to the river. Our choice was the West Sabine Hut with a stove that did not smoke and warmed the room well - we left nearby Sabine Forks Hut to other trampers already there.

We had intended to walk up to Blue Lake Hut the following day and stay overnight before walking down to Sabine Hut on the shores of Lake Rotoroa, but settled for a day walk from West Sabine Hut to achieve much of what we intended to do. This enabled Stan and Keith to make an early start back across the saddle to John Tait Hut and Lorraine.

The West Branch of the Sabine is a steep-sided valley until it breaks out at the bushline at Blue Lake. The peaks seemed poised to fall headlong into the valley, scree slopes plunged down to the river's edge and the forest lay green, wet, mossy and smelling of rotting vegetation, reminiscent of sour wine. There was birdlife, but by New South Wales standards somewhat sparse. Always present was the plunging, cascading river, the waters seldom quiet on their journey to the lower reaches of the valley and Lake Rotoroa.

The weather slowly deteriorated as the morning progressed. Cloud came in from the north and one by one the tops disappeared into mist and cloud. Then came the rain, light at first then later quite steady, raising the level of the West Branch of the Sabine River overnight by a couple of inches. The rain dampened the end of, but did not spoil, a good day walk. Our stroll up to Blue Lake was leisurely and there was time for a good look at the lake and the mountains before all were reduced to shades of grey.

The hut at Blue Lake held interest with four deerstalkers showing-off a chamois, shot the night before in the upper reaches of the Waiau Valley. It was first encounter in a month of walking with an important facet of New Zealand mountain life, the deerstalker. Stan, John and Keith showed their paces in returning from Blue Lake to West Sabine Hut in a little over one hour in misty rain. The others came in more slowly, gathering more rain than sweat for their efforts.

The next day came clear and chilly after the rain which had stopped in the early hours of the morning. Snow could be seen on the tops in the moonlight and the sprinkling did not disappear until around mid-morning. By then, clouds were again building up along the tops.

By 7.00 am, Stan and Keith had departed for Travers Saddle and the walk to John Tait Hut to meet Lorraine as arranged. The remainder of the party would proceed as planned down the Sabine to the hut at Lake Rotoroa, stay overnight and, weather permitting, carry on to Lake Angelus Hut at 6100 feet, followed by a walk down Robert Ridge to end the walk on Good Friday. If the weather turned bad, the arrangement was made for the party to walk out to the lake end at Rotoroa, where Stan would collect them in the mini-bus as soon as he realised the route would not be down Robert Ridge. The weather did turn bad. But first an account of a fine day's walking from Sabine Forks down to the lake.

We left the West Sabine Hut at 8.00 am and followed an excellent track after crossing the footbridge to the true left of the river. The valley did not widen as did the Travers, but there was sufficient width for modest flats to give frequent views to the tops. The sandflies were modest too and we were able to enjoy the occasional break alongside the river in peace. A new stretch of track, cut across a bluff adjacent to where the river passes through a gorge, indicated a lot of good work by Park Board employees and is an excellent route around a difficult section of the valley. About 45 minutes (route guide time) from the Sabine Hut the river was crossed above a gorge and deep, crystal clear water, and from there to the hut it was easy travelling on a good track. The afternoon was spent killing sandflies, wandering along the lake's edge and generally enjoying the fine views in rather sultry conditions.

Two deerstalkers were at the hut when we arrived. They were working Block 11 in the vicinity of the hut without success in spite of numerous deer sightings in the thick forest. Behind us came a park ranger from Westland National Park (on a busman's holiday one might say) and his mate, after a brief tramping trip up the Travers Valley (they reported Lorraine to be in good spirits) and over a ridge to the south-west of Mt. Cuppola into the East Branch of the Sabine in a tricky crossing. There followed a pleasant evening around the fire talking about N.Z./Australia tramping and walking conditions.

Thursday, 8 April, dawned misty with low cloud, not bad enough to cancel outright our plans but leaving a lot of doubt as to what conditions would be like two-thirds of a mile above us. At 7.45 am we walked around the back of the hut and stepped straight into a steep ridge climb which lifted us 3550 feet to Mt. Cedric in little over  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. We passed through the cloud layer around the lake to find ourselves in clear air, but by the time we left the bushline 500 feet below Mt. Cedric we had entered another cloud layer with the added discomforts of light, cold rain on a steady breeze. After an hour on the tops walking to Mt. Cedric in thick cloud in the hope of a break it became obvious that the weather was worsening, so we turned back and sought shelter in the bushline, and later from heavy rain, at low level at the Sabine Hut on the lake edge. On the tops, snow fell thickly. What had taken us over four hours of uphill plodding was descended in 1-2 hours, depending on the various members of the party. We all felt disappointed in having to abort the last stage of the walk. The eleven miles through

the forest on the lakeside Rotoroa Track the next day was no substitute for ridge walking in fine weather.

As expected on the eve of the Easter weekend, the hut filled with trampers about dusk. There were university students from Christchurch, a trumper from Nelson and a high school party from Levin in the North Island. In the crowded hut, everyone found somewhere to sleep after a chaotic 2-3 hours of cooking by candlelight on a cramped bench. The rain drummed on the roof, reminding us of why we were all cramped together in a rather fetid atmosphere, shoulder to shoulder and mostly strangers.

The walkout along the eastern edge of Lake Rotoroa took 4½-6 hours, depending upon whether one was at the front of the party or at the rear. Bill and John moved ahead through the day on the well-defined track to reach the ranger station soon after 3.30 pm, thus enabling an early message to be got through to Park HQ where Stan and company were waiting to know our whereabouts to come and pick us up in the minibus.

For Stan, Keith and Lorraine, their part of the walk had finished in heavy rain, strong wind and cold temperature around 5.00 pm the previous evening. Stan and Keith had reached John Tait Hut about 2.30 pm, after leaving West Sabine Hut, and they reported a memorable reverse crossing of the Travers Saddle. Snow on the tops, ice on the track and brilliantly fine weather. Atop the saddle, they had looked down on a mist-filled Travers Valley. Lorraine reported a quiet couple of days at the hut, a successful cleaning of the stove to stop any smoking and the benefit to her blistered heels of the rest. The walkout on the Thursday morning had started in misty conditions down the west side of the Travers Valley to Coldwater Hut for lunch, but the cold front caught up with them as it had with the other leg of the party on Mt. Cedric and it was a soaking afternoon's walking around the edge of Lake Rotoiti to the West Bay campground. Rather than pitch tents, they slept reasonably comfortably in the minibus in the hope of better weather the following day.

With the party together again late on Good Friday, the third walk had been completed, not quite as intended but nevertheless successfully and safely. A clear night and full moon lighted the snow-covered mountains, and we all slept well in an overnight bivvy on the floor of the West Bay campground cooking shelter. At 8.15 am on Saturday, 10 April, we left our hut fees at Park HQ and headed north on State Highway 6 for Picton and then down the storm-lashed east coast of the South Island to Christchurch and the connecting Air New Zealand flight to Sydney on Easter Monday morning.

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(Map references: Nelson Lakes National Park, NZMS 164; or NZMS 1:63360 series - St.Arnaud S33 and Spenser S40)

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DAY WALK on 21st NOVEMBER - Waterfall to Otford - Leader: Joe Marton.

This walk is a TEST WALK - Please alter your Walks Programme accordingly.

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CONSERVATION AND PUNISHMENT.

by Peter Miller.

The following report on the Australian penal system has been received from the planet Xyloton which is ten billion light years away. An agent from the planet has infiltrated the Sydney Bushwalkers in order to find out how conservationists are punished, and a copy of the highly confidential report has been leaked to the magazine editor - - - - read on.

Report on Earthly Penal Systems.

To gather material for my thesis on penal systems in remote parts of the Universe I was transported to a country called Australia on the planet Earth.

The earthlings are a strange multi-coloured collection of warm-blooded creatures who move about on legs and wave their arms about in the most alarming fashion. The creatures have to maintain an absurdly high internal temperature in order to function correctly. They dislike damp, heat, cold and high winds, and any variation from a narrow humidity and temperature range causes them acute anxiety and discomfort and in extreme cases death.

Certain of these creatures are guilty of the crime of "conservation". This strange crime is found nowhere else in the universe and is evidenced by a desire to preserve areas of quite useless rivers, trees and mountains with all their messy animal, bird and insect life. These areas are to be prevented from becoming part of the civilized controlled environment enjoyed by the remainder of the country.

It is here that the deadly cunning of the earthlings' penal system becomes evident because those creatures found guilty of the crime of "conservation" are compelled to carry out a form of punishment called "bushwalking" in those same areas they wish to preserve. They are forced to endure extremes of heat and cold, wetness and thirst, high winds and exhaustion on a Spartan diet. They are eventually allowed to return to the more advanced parts of the country where the normal people live.

Quite an elaborate ritual has been devised for punishing "conservationists" and a list of penalties is drawn up in the "Walks Programme". Minor offenders are given a day's punishment on Sundays and are not forced to walk very far from transport or climb too many hills. More serious offenders are sent away for two days or more with heavy weights strapped to their backs. They have to sleep on the cold ground protected from the elements by a piece of nylon only a fraction of a millimetre thick. Some really serious offenders are sent to Tasmania or New Zealand and are made to suffer mud, rain, sleet and snow while eating dried vegetables and biscuits which have been dropped out of the sky at great expense.

During the winter months another class of offender is forced to drive long hours to Kosciusko to sleep in little tents in the snow. Before dawn they rise to strap contrivances of plastic fence posts to their feet in order to maximise their chances of falling over and breaking one or both legs.

In spite of the severity of the sentences the rate of recidivism is distressingly high. Many even corrupt their offspring to their perverted way of thinking and the poor little mites can be seen bushwalking like hardened criminals. Attempts to separate the children from the parents so that they

can grow into normal smog-loving consumers have so far failed.

First offenders are called "prospectives" and luckily for normal society the majority of these soon realize the error of their ways and return to being normal consumers.

Once a person becomes a "member" there is little hope for him or her, even though extra punishments are devised for correction. Some are made into "leaders" and have to endure the insults and complaints of their fellow walkers as well as the hardships of the walk. Others are forced to become "committee members" and are made to sit on uncomfortable seats while passing mind-numbing motions.

Really persistent offenders are sent out on solo bushwalks. I gather that a certain James Brown is a particularly bad "conservationist" as he has been subjected to numerous solo trips over the years. This said James appears to be so enamoured of cooking over open fires that he carries a small wooden smoking receptacle between his teeth which merely serves to advertise his unrepentant state.

My general impression of "conservationists" is that they are a pretty tough type of criminal. Research into old records here on Xyloton reveals that many years ago this crime was first observed, but quick action by the 'thought' police eradicated the problem. Today we enjoy a totally computer-controlled, humidified, non-toxic, air-conditioned, stabilized, uniform society.

While in Australia I assumed the name and semi-human form of one Peter Miller to avoid detection as an agent of Xyloton.

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#### CARLSBAD CAVERNS.

by Allan Wyborn.

Tucked away in the far south-eastern corner of "The Land of Enchantment" (New Mexico, U.S.A.), are Carlsbad Caverns, the second-largest system in the world. Although many other caves are deeper, the correct yardstick is by volume - and the main thing about Carlsbad is its colossal volume!

The limestone of which the caves are formed was deposited when the area was an inland arm of the sea during Permian times. Carlsbad entrance is situated on the top of the 64 km long Guadalupe Reef escarpment at an elevation of 1350 metres. The approach is through a 10 km canyon from Whites City on Highway 180, there being no camping permitted in the Carlsbad National Park.

Visitors have a choice of either walking in (down) through the natural entrance on a complete 5 km trip, or entering by elevator for the last 2 km of this tour - a walk through the "Big Room". We arrived for the guided walk-in at 10 am which proved a good starting time. The outside temperature was  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$  maximum (and  $-16^{\circ}\text{C}$  minimum!), so the temperature of  $13^{\circ}\text{C}$  inside the caverns was quite warm by comparison. It took two hours to descend the vertical drop of 230 metres by well-graded ramps, with two stops for lectures on the way. At one point we were shown a "bottomless pit", well-fenced, of course!

The guides allowed us to see all the many formations without trying to

give us fanciful descriptions. The many shapes were fantastic, but as only 5% are active, the colours were quite dull - not like our beautiful colours such as we have in, say, Jenolan Caves. Another factor affecting this is the lack of various minerals - even the active formations had very little colour.

There were 125 people in our group, including three guides, which was just an average-size party for them. The guides provided much information and were most concerned about the welfare of the party. After the descent through many caverns, there was now an ascent of 30 metres, which acted as an appetiser for lunch and a cup of tea, available in one of the huge caverns 200 metres underground.

One fascinating facet of the caverns is the Bat Story. Early after discovery it was noticed that millions of bats spiral out every evening in summer, at the rate of 5,000 animals per minute, to feed upon insects and to return before sun-up to sleep throughout the day. The bats winter in Mexico. Huge guano deposits were discovered by the settlers inside the caves under the bat roosts, so that their interest in the caves became commercial. Nearly 100,000 tons of guano were removed in 20 years but increasing transportation costs eventually caused bankruptcy of the companies. Now hundreds of tourists line up to see the bats emerge just before sunset.

After lunch we started on the second part of the inspection to witness the "Big Room". This is a self-guided tour where you can take as long as you like and "waste" as much film as you desire taking flashlight pictures. At this point each person is provided with a localised radio receiver. As one proceeds along the path you observe the word "BEGIN" on the pavement. By raising the radio to your ear it automatically switches on and delivers a message. When the word "END" appears you lower the radio and it switches off. Over 2 km this leads to a lot of arm-bending. (This is not the only place where there is lot of "arm-bending".)

The "Big Room" really appeared to us as many connected caverns, full of beautiful formations of all types, whereas we had been expecting one large area only. Nevertheless they all have the same roof and a floor area equal to 14 football fields (American) and a maximum height of 82 metres. Wheel-chairs can be used on most of the "Big Room" graded paths. There is continuous subdued lighting throughout all caverns.

We returned to daylight by elevator in a few minutes - a vertical height of 225 metres. We had been underground for over four hours and had walked more than 5 km. In all, a most entertaining day indeed.

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THE AUGUST GENERAL MEETING.

by Harry Wallace.

The meeting began at about 2020 hours with 30 or so members present and Vice-President Ainslie Morris in the chair. There were apologies from Tony Marshall, Barbara Bruce and Steve and Wendy Hodgman. New members Pam Reid, Colin Reid, Wendy Heap, George Mawer and Peter Hislop answered the call to be welcomed as new members, and Ray Franklin and Sandy Hynes came forward from previous general meetings.

The Minutes were read and received. Matters arising brought agreement to a proposal that surplus funds from the Annapurna Climbing Group be used to set up a memorial fund with proceeds available to fund future expeditions. It seems S.B.W. contributed to the original fund but the expedition was cut short due to casualties early in the climb.

Correspondence comprised letters to Sheila Binns, Denise Shaw and Dunlop. There was also a letter advising change of address from Chris Perrers and a reply from Dunlop. This reply letter is to be read to the September General Meeting.

The Treasurer's Report indicated that we began the month with \$2881.92, received \$298.50, spent \$462.75 to close with \$2717.67. The Coolana Account balance was unchanged at \$99.53.

Our Federation delegates had fumbled this time around and there was no formal report. It seems the most recent Federation meeting was concerned with the election of officers. There was also an announcement of the Federation Ball to be held on Friday, 24th September.

All of which brought us to the Walks Report. We started with Barrie Murdoch leading 4 members, one prospective and one visitor through early frost and fog on Saturday morning to a brighter morrow on his Blackhorse Range trip for the weekend of 16,17,18 July. There was no report of Charlie Brown's Yabboro Flat trip but Peter Hislop had 4 starters on his Wollongambe Crater walk, reporting easy ridges and difficult navigation.

Of the two day walks that weekend Ralph Penglis had 30 people, many of them students as visitors, on his Sydney Harbour Walk. There were some dropouts but the remnant finished up at Manly. Roy Braithwaite, on the other hand, had 17 people on his Lilyvale to Bundeena ramble, despite some problems with trains. Bill Hall's midweek walk from Waterfall to Heathcote went, but there were no details.

The following weekend, 23,24,25 July saw Jim Laing with some navigational problems, 5 starters and a rather confused report. It was rumoured to be a get fit walk in preparation for Central Australia, so maybe not everyone kept up .... or something. John Newman had 11 people on his Bundeena to Otford walk and they encountered deer and whales, each in their respective medium, and finished the walk with apple pie and icecream. Jim Brown reported 14 members and 3 prospectives enjoying perfect weather on the walk from Waterfall to Lilyvale.

Derek Wilson had 6 of our members and various other clubs either on, or in parallel with, his Tinpot Track, Cox River, Breakfast Creek trip over the weekend of 30,31 July, 1st August. Frank Taeker led 15 members and 5 prospectives on his Budawangs walk of that same weekend. They reported perfect

weather, but had one member back 24 hours late. There was no report of Joe Marton's Glenbrook walk but Bill Hall's Waterfall trip did go, although there were no details.

The weekend of 6,7,8 August saw something of an innovation with Ainslie Morris conducting a walk based on the Bundanoon Youth Hostel. There were 20 people on the walk - described as good for those who dislike winter camping. Alan Pike had only 3 starters for his modified Three Peaks Trip, so cancelled the trip. There was no report of Errol Sheedy's walk from Heathcote to Waterfall, but Kath Brown had 30 starters on her Red Hand Cave walk to end the Walks Report.

General Business brought a motion that Alex Cooley be appointed as club representative to Natural Areas Ltd. He is to attend the coming general meeting and report back.

Announcements brought news that the N.P.A. Journal is seeking details of Paul Barnes for their potted histories of conservation figures.

After that it was just a matter of closing the meeting at 2115 hours and unleashing the ravaging hordes on the coffee and biscuits.

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VERSE.

by Errol Sheedy.

A bushwalker's main delights  
Are forest tracks and mountain heights,  
And fervent sea-ferns in the swell,  
Quiet where the blue rock-gropers dwell  
Beneath the sea-surge hungry tramp and tramp  
Creating life and life anew  
Out of the seething strife that grew  
From every crash and crump  
And maelstrom whirl of angry foam.

And dew-dipped dog-rose shining bright,  
Pendulous in the morning light;  
And harsh fire-ravaged bushland dells  
Covering themselves in Christmas bells,  
Where blood-red pointers on the trees  
Indicate the life that frees  
Itself from the blackened shell -  
Grim reminder of a day in hell.

They quite consume the fragrant strand:  
Come, walk upon the living land.

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THE GREAT ZIGZAG (LITHGOW)

OR

HOW THE WEST WAS WON.

by David Ingram.

In March this year, a visit to the Great or Western Zig Zag near Lithgow was included in a walk from Bell to Lithgow. Many of those who came requested a re-run, so to comply with this, the walk has been programmed for Saturday 23rd October. The Saturday train service allows nearly two hours longer in the area than on Sunday. Since March, the Sydney-Lithgow and Zig Zag Railway fares have been increased. Even so, members wishing to see something different should not be disappointed.

To quote from the pamphlet "The Zig Zag Railway" - "The Great or Lithgow Zig Zag was begun in 1866 and finished in 1869. At the time, it was the cheapest way of bringing the railway down the steep western face of the Blue Mountains to the Central Western Slopes beyond. The Zig Zag is in the form of a giant "Z". The present access road to Top Point is called Top Road and forms the top of the "Z". The Middle Road is the diagonal, and it is upon this that the present Zig Zag Railway is built. The bottom of the "Z" is now occupied, mainly, by the present Western Railway Line."

"The Zig Zag, with its three beautiful sandstone viaducts, man-made ledges clinging to the mountain side, and the two tunnels, was acclaimed as an engineering masterpiece at the time."

"In 1910, the new main line, with its system of 10 tunnels, was built to do away with the bottleneck that the Zig Zag had become. The rails were torn up, and for the next 60 years the old formation slumbered half-forgotten, overgrown and derelict."

This is no longer the case and the Zig Zag Railway Society has succeeded in recreating part of the old Zig Zag as it was early this century.

Mr. K. Robinson, a local resident, has promised to join the group and will be able to answer many of your questions.

As a bonus, the Bell District is noted for the Waratahs, which grow in profusion and should be in bloom.

DETAILS:

Route: Bell - Newnes Junction - Dargan's (Railway) Deviation - Clarence Tunnel - Zig Zag Railway - Lithgow. 18 km.

Train: 7.20 am Central - Lithgow. Alight at Bell.  
6.15 pm Lithgow - Central - due 9.08 pm.

Tickets: Mini fare to Lithgow - \$7.20 return. IMPORTANT: Ask for mini fare, ordinary return ticket is \$14.00. Ticket on Zig Zag Railway is \$1.50 if more than 20 in the party.

Wet weather gear and pullover advisable as weather can be cold and/or misty in October, even if warm in Sydney. Bring torch for Clarence Tunnel. Tea, coffee, soft drinks, sweets available at Zig Zag. Restaurants and take-aways in Lithgow.

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