

TOUGH CREEK

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers Incorporated, Box 4476 GPO, Sydney 2001. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening at 8 pm at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 16 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli (near Milson's Point Railway Station). Visitors and prospective members are welcome any Wednesday. To advertise in this magazine, please contact the Business Manager.

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MARCH 1992

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SBW OFFICE BEARERS & COMMITTEE 1992

The following Office Bearers and Committee Members as well as other Club workers were elected at the Annual General Meeting held on 11th March:-

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2 Confederation Delegates

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Kosciusko Huts Association

Delegate Ian Wolfe

* Indicates members of Committee.

For Annual Subscriptions
see Page 9NOTE: All Club workers are
Honorary.

* * * * *

* TO WANDER AND WONDER *

by One-of-the-Three

It was Boxing Day. Gully parked the Volvo at the Guthega power station and joined Captain and Old Son in the VW bound for Dead Horse Gap. It was Gully's first walking trip in the Kosciusko N.P. and his eyes darted left and right as he took in the passing scene. At 6 pm the trio shouldered their 40 lb packs and began the haul up the old bridle path through snow gums to the Ramsheads. Manurial evidence of brumbies lay on the track.

Huffing and puffing and random thoughts were interrupted: "The bloody meths - still in the car!" Old Son dropped his pack and retreated down the path. Gully and Captain welcomed the rest. The path entered a snow-grass clearing and three pairs of eyes met without comment. They dropped their packs and set off in different directions for water. Old Son followed the clearing to a trickle covered by bushes and soon the water was on the boil for tea.

"Look at that, camped below South Ramshead!" he enthused as the others pitched their tents. Gully, mindful of the possibility of stampeding brumbies during the night, pitched his tent beside a fallen snow gum. Old Son pitched his tent in the middle of the clearing; he would happily die under the trampling hooves of a bloody, big, black brumby stallion, or so he said. The gentle pitter-patter of light rain on the tents induced a good night's sleep for the adventurous three.

Old Son, eager to get up on the three Ramsheads that next day, lit the Trangia, boiled up water and handed his tented companions their 6 am early morning cuppa, nothing less than Twinings Queen Mary and Yunnan. Packed ready to go, they paused and deliberately sat down and yarned for a few minutes - a mute protest at those leaders who bound off before every walker is packed and ready to move. They left the snow gums and crossed the alpine meadows to a rocky outcrop where they dropped their packs, caught their breath and gazed up at Ramshead South.

They set out, Old Son eager to be first at the trig. He scrambled up on a direct route but was surprised at the last leg-up to come face to face with Captain. "Where did you come from?" - "I came up the easy way," replied the big man, always master of the situation.

They pointed out Tom Groggin, The Pilot, the Cascades trail, and away at the horizon, Victoria's Mount Bogong with its mantle of snow. But Gully was not yet showing signs of enthusiasm, content to observe, to see what he could see. The middle-aged mates picked their way through the rocks below Ramshead and welcomed the sight and sound of a busy stream at the head of Bogong Creek.

Dropping their packs yet again, they slowly ascended Ramshead in the mid-day heat of a blazing blue sky. Gully was intrigued with the Swampy Plains River as seen from Ramshead and he predicted that, in time, the plain would drain off into Leatherbarrel Creek on its course through gorges to the Murray River. For Gully, the absence of trees in this alpine setting meant no shade and no back-rest during lunch. His failure to enthuse about the Ramsheads caused his friends to shake their heads in disbelief. "Knee-deep in wildflowers, you promised me." Gully bowled at them.

Below Ramshead North they watched a young walker dash along and down a snow-drift to retrieve his wind-blown hat. Not a slip or a slide! Oh, to be young again. Captain and Old Son, both admirers of this tent-shaped mass of boulders, led Gully up the easy way through the tors of Ramshead North. Old Son was at it again. "There's Twynam, Carruthers, Kosci and Etheridge," he called from his perch upon the topmost rock. Captain and Gully pretended not to notice.

After admiring a nearby rock formation, frequently photographed, they set out for Lake Cootapatamba en route to Wilkinson Valley. Gully consulted his ever-at-hand map and pointed in this and that direction, volunteering: "That's the Sivowy River watershed, with the Thredbo River watershed over there, and the Murray River watershed over here." The other two muttered their agreement.

As they skirted the upper Swampy Plains River valley, a black belt of bad weather approached from the west. "Might be just as well to make camp down there," advised the Captain

and they dropped down to the river below Lake Cootapatamba. The rain did come but passed over quickly and the aged adventurers found themselves abortively camped short of their target. But it was a pleasant spot below Kosciusko and Gully wandered off towards Cootapatamba Hut. There had been some discussion over afternoon tea when Old Son described the colour of the hut as shocking pink, but Captain and Gully had insisted on red, so Old Son deferred to Captain's artistic judgment and Gully's no-nonsense assessment. While Gully wandered, Captain and Old Son bathed in the river in what can be truthfully described as the twinkling of an eye.

Next day, packs on backs, the three wise men picked their way through bogs and rocks to Lake Cootapatamba. Captain was first there, casting his artist's eye over the scene. "A little bit of Old Ireland, this could be." Looking at the snow on the Kosci ridge coming right down to the lake's edge, they wondered not at the rigorous ordeal of bathing the previous day.

Meeting the tourists at Rawsons Pass, the three laden lads intended skirting Kosciusko but Gully skirted that intention by chatting with non-skirted girls on their way to the summit. Let the truth be told, Old Son could not let another trig pass by, so they dropped their packs and went up over the northern shoulder, disdaining the road. At the summit they were just three more tourists so let us draw a veil over Old Son's antics up there. "Hello, young fellow, would you like to be the highest boy in all Australia."

Across the shoulder of Kosci they directed their course down into the Wilkinson Valley and made camp beside a tributary of the creek, in full view of Townsend and the Abbott Range. It was lunchtime and Old Son had wild ideas of spending the afternoon scrambling over the Abbotts and Townsend. Gully, a tree, creek and gully walker from way back, quietly announced his intension of exploring Wilkinsons Creek; Captain nodded his complete agreement. So the three set off down the snaking creek. Captain had first been there when seventeen-years-old, solo walking with only a sketch map and the sun to guide him (he still sniffs at the constant use of a compass). "Fifty years ago, eh?" "Not quite that long ago, Old Son."

They came to the Main Range to wander and wonder, and along Wilkinsons Creek they did just that. Gully peered into the water for signs of life and in an overenthusiastic moment spoke of the expectation of platypus. The artist in the Captain was delighted, enthralled again by it all. Cascades of dynamic energy, pools of crystal-clear water, boulders of pastel hues, exciting sounds of a racing stream, flow in full flight. The artist called and the others dropped down to where he stood, agape at a beautiful pool, screened by huge boulders, water cascading in, over and under rocks and then held still momentarily before spilling out. The men sat and stared, transfixed by the beauty of the natural setting.

Captain leant towards the older, smaller man and said, "When you are an old man in a wheelchair and you tell your grandchildren about this wondrous pool, what will your answer be if they ask - 'Did you go in?'" In answer, Old Son's fingers reached for his laces, buttons and belt. At the water's edge he shed his socks et al and walked in. Eyes opened wide and lips mouthed words that did not sound as he paddled to the centre of the pool. Captain followed him into the water and his bass-baritone exclamations did find voice. The psychologist sat quietly amused at the antics of his companions. Gasping, Old Son raised an arm and sank below the surface, an act of baptism in the icy waters, the melted snows of Townsend. Gully left his rock, undressed and entered the water as the others had, not so much to bathe or swim, but to be immersed in this magical pool of a mountain stream.

The mist came over the Kosci saddle and down the valley as the three set out for their camp. They approached a rocky outcrop named The Fang by Captain in years gone by. A grassy ramp led to rocks and quickly they were on top with the mist swirling around them. "The mood of the mountains," roared the artist and the others echoed the sentiment.

Captain, a big man whose broad shoulders and squatter's hat give him an air of authority, of confidence in the field, led the lay-day. His artistic eye recognises readily the line, the colour, the contrast, the form in the landscape and he readily conveys his observations to his companions. Gully, a tall thin man whose downcast eyes are alert to animal tracks and scats, plants, insects on the snow, in the water, in the air.

Captain led his crew up along the headwaters of Wilkinsons. Looking back they agreed

that the massif of Kosciusko was impressive from that angle. Up on to Townsend, a mountain devoid of tourists, preferred by walkers, "Old Kosci" to the cattlemen of old. Gully scooped up a prize, the scat of a vegetarian animal, he thought; his investigative mind at work. On Townsend they looked down on Geehi, Khankoban Pondage, and over to Watsons Crags and Jagungal on the northern horizon. After lunch at the summit they scrambled down the rocks, Old Son posing on a leaning rock, frequently photographed, but there were no cameras to oblige. Crossing snow patches and skirting outcrops they came out on Alice Rawson.

What a sight it was, looking down on Lady Northcote's Canyon. Gully could no longer contain his enthusiasm. Another creek to explore! Captain led the way down through steep snow patches and rocky outcrops, and Old Son lingered to study Carruthers Spur and to admire the greens, the dives of the other side. "There could be a route down Carruthers Spur to the Canyon." "It appears to be very steep to me," replied Gully. Down at the creek they rock-hopped up to Lake Albina where Captain was already standing on the rim, proudly viewing his "territory".

Wandering along the western bank of the lake, they observed grassy banks within the hollows where snow and ice were melting. Yes, winter comes, the pond water freezes, the ice expands, gradually pushing the banks outwards over the years. Dandelions growing in the ruins of Albina Hut? Sadly, yes. The weary walkers hauled up on to Muellers Peak and made their individual ways back to the camp on Wilkinsons, each with his own thoughts, happy with a full day spent on the Main Range.

Shouldering heavy packs for the last full day of walking, they climbed out of Wilkinson Valley, had a last look and joined the lakes track to Muellers Pass. Stopping on Mount Northcote they looked down on Lake Albina and across to the steep slopes of Townsend Spur where they had descended from Alice Rawson the previous day. Gully was impressed again and his forefinger traced the route of their descent. He was less impressed with the view across the Snowy Valley to Charlottes Pass. Below them were the ruins of Kunama Hut, victim of an avalanche in 1956, but Old Son could not recall its name nor the date of its demise. They looked down on Club Lake and wondered at the ski tracks on the snowy steep slopes of Carruthers. "Of course, the snow melts underneath and leaves the crust on top."

They wandered out on Carruthers Spur, Old Son looking down into a deep gully, probably author Elyne Mitchell's "Little Austria", which turns and leads down to the canyon. After walking past The Sentinel - next time, maybe - the tiring trio lunched overlooking Blue Lake. Gully spotted a grasshopper slowly battling hypothermia on a snow patch as it made its way feebly to the snow grass. Without packs they sauntered out on Watsons Crags, Old Son pointing out Elyne Mitchell's "Friar's Alp", Mount Tate, and: "Yes, yes, there it is, Dicky Cooper Bogong, midway between Tate and Jagungal."

Under a darkening sky, mist on the mountain tops, they passed over the shoulder of Mount Twynam and picked their way carefully over some of the roughest ground on the range. They skirted snow patches, crossed the headwaters of Pounds Creek and rounded a ridge to see Maurie Bloom's party setting up camp in the highest grove of snow gums. Old Son bellowed a "Daaay-oooh" down to them and joined Captain's shouts of "Get out of our campsite!" After exchanging more pleasant greetings with their SBW friends, the troublesome three dropped down to the next grove of snow gums and set up camp. The mist was coming down off Paralyser and across the Snowy River. It seemed to rain all night and the split-splat of raindrops off the trees above the tents disturbed the campers' sleep.

The mood of the mountains! Mist and rain, wet and cold. The packs were heavy with wet tents. A farewell "daay-och" to the party up in the mist and the trio descended through boggy marshes, snow gum groves, and thigh-high flowering scrub. "Now you are knee-deep in wildflowers," roared Captain to Gully. They crossed the Snowy on the bridge near Illawong Lodge and Gully led them along the track to Farm Creek. Captain and Old Son crossed the creek on the flying fox for a lark. Gully, disdaining such boyish behaviour, rock-hopped across.

Guthaga at 9.50 am was cheerless. Wet, misty, cold, and not a cup of coffee to be had. Guthaga was closed. Gully set out to road-walk the 7 km to his car at the power station where the walk was originally planned to finish. While they waited, Captain and Old Son were strangely silent; there was little to enthuse about now. Their thoughts were of dry clean clothes, a hot shower, a home-cooked meal, and the comfort of one's own bed at home. They had wandered the Main Range and they would always have the memory of the highlights of the walk. And they would return, again to wander and wonder in these mountains.

A TRIBUTE TO THE SILENT DIGNITY OF A FRIEND

by Brian Holden

It is ten years now but I still remember you each time I pass your old place. For most of your long life your environment was created entirely by the random forces of nature. But gradually that all went until there was just you. At first I gave you a respectful glance but with the passing of time, you seemed to draw me to you until I saw you as dominating everything around you. I realised that in some abstract way you were communicating with me and it was a pleasant experience. As that is what friendship is all about, I do not suppose that I was being too eccentric to call you my friend - my poor friend surrounded by an alien world. As my affection for you grew, my unease grew because you looked so out of place - almost like an intruder.

One day I saw that you were gone. I was told that you had to go as your space was required. "Required" they said coldly. Those few square meters that had been yours for all those years. I sensed that you felt the danger as when I looked at you, you seemed to look back to me for help - but I was helpless. I was helpless because the species I belong to, has, to the misfortune of the planet we shared, formed a social structure which has a great momentum to invade the space of all other life. That structure has me trapped as I depend upon it for my survival. Pathetically, I can only hope that its momentum decreases.

Your removal was justified as every injustice must be. You could not feel nor think as they could - and that was that. If only they could appreciate that you could communicate in another way. You radiated pure substance when all around you was purely superficial. Why had they not noticed this? Maybe I noticed a quality which was not there? I do not believe so for there is another world inside this world which modern social conditioning has dulled the receptors of most men to. Tragically, while that conditioned rigidity dominates, injustices will be done.

* * *

Now what eulogy would be suitable for my defenseless friend? To start with I could say that from your great girth that you were very old. I could say that you were probably born when Columbus was alive. That is the usual response to the death of those of your kind which have reached a great age - but I won't follow that tradition. Why should I link your worth to some event in the history of man? You can stand on your own dignity. The coexistence of man is not needed to dignify your existence. It was undignified man who wantonly put you out of existence.

I would rather say that you experienced many, many magic days of peace which I imagine my spirit sharing with you. Sunrises reflecting off your leaves, cold winds and balmy breezes swaying your branches, afternoon showers washing over your trunk - and when the rain stopped, you glistened in the sunset. They were all much the same - those days - and yet they were entirely different. Little things made them so. Wonderful little things like the movement of insects and shadows and the changing of colours.

Those were the days when there was no white man anywhere in the land. There was the black man but he was different. He belonged to a different social structure to my own - and it gave him dignity as it let the land retain its. One day all men may see this and when they do they will live in real dignity - just like you did.

KANANGRA WALLS CALLOUT 9/11 FEBRUARY, 1992

by Keith Maxwell

(This report was made to the February meeting of the Confederation of NSW Bushwalking Clubs by Keith Maxwell, Director of S & R and is published in this magazine with his permission.)

Bushwalkers Search & Rescue was contacted just prior to midnight on Saturday 8/2/92 to assist in the search for a couple on a five-day walk from Katoomba to Kanangra Walls who had missed their Friday evening rendezvous for transport home.

The weather was appalling. Heavy rain had began late in the week and did not ease off until late on 11/2/92. S & R sent out five (5) search teams from Kanangra Walls on Sunday 9/2/92. One team entered Kanangra Creek and ascertained that it was impossible to travel along the creek. Another team went out on the Thurat Range to Mount Paralyser. Three (3) teams went out to Mount Cloudmaker to search the 'High Gangerangs'. These three teams camped overnight and continued searching on 10/2/92. The local S.E.S. provided one team which searched down Mount Guogogang to Konangaroo Clearing.

One Bushwalkers Search & Rescue team was also sent in from Katoomba towards the Cox's River in case the couple were retracing their steps.

The weather cleared just enough to fly helicopters and the couple were located by a helicopter hired by N.P. & W.S. late on the morning of Tuesday 11/2/92. They were towards the northern side of the High Gangerangs in an area our search teams had not yet moved into. The NPWS' own helicopter and others owned by Polair and Dick Smith had become available to take part in the search but had not at that time entered that area.

This was a particularly challenging callout. The Katoomba search team had to come down off Narrow Neck as flooded creeks prevented them from reaching Medlow Gap. The weather and wet scrub made for slow progress. Teams heading to Mount Cloudmaker took up to two hours longer than normal.

Co-operation between the services present at this search was excellent. The local Police were in charge (of course) but chose to give general direction only and to rely on the experience of the locals and bushwalkers in allocating the search areas.

Kanangra Walls is now within range of mobile/car phones. Bushwalkers Search & Rescue kept one Committee member in Sydney to co-ordinate fresh search teams. Thus late Monday we were able to offer a complete replacement set of personnel, if required, for Tuesday morning. This was on top of having available personnel to assist in the rescue in the Snowy Mountains of the group from Bateman's Bay.

Whilst the persons involved in both of the above rescues were in a bushwalking club, these clubs were not Confederation clubs. This does not seem to have affected the response by bushwalkers. At least one of these clubs is very likely to join the Confederation.

On behalf of the Confederation I would like to thank all those bushwalkers who responded so magnificently when asked. Bushwalkers Search & Rescue is run by a Committee, so that it can be contacted when needed, but really is nothing without the many ordinary club members who come prepared to go out in any weather. The bushwalkers in the search teams did the Confederation proud but those on standby should not be forgotten. I'm sure they were under no illusions of the terrible conditions awaiting them at Kanangra Walls.

The following I'm sure is an incomplete list of clubs who responded:- Bankstown, Camden, Three Peaks, Mount Druitt, CMW, SBW, Sutherland, Fairfield, SUBW, Canberra, Shoalhaven, Berrima NPA, Wollongong NPA, Sydney NPA, Span, Central West and Springwood.

The following letter was received by Keith from two members of the Upper Blue Mountains B.W.Club:- We could like to extend our sincerest thanks to Search & Rescue for the time and effort members put in to the search for our two friends lost in the Mount Cloudmaker area during the 'Big Wet'. Particular to those who braved the appalling conditions to go out into the bush to search - thank you. You came so close to finding them! While this was an experience none of us would wish to repeat in a hurry, useful lessons were learned and we all came through the wiser for it.

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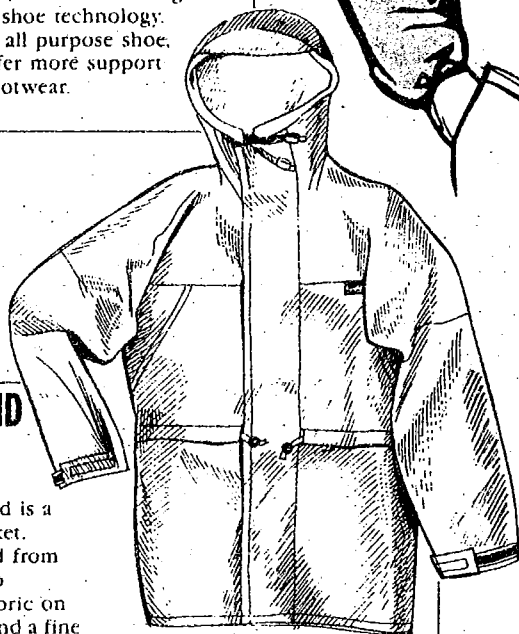
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A WEEKEND IN THE "ROYAL"

by Keith Docherty

1st & 2nd February

I met Laurie Quaken and Rosemary Kenny (she was on a visit from Brisbane) in Eddy Avenue where we boarded the bus for Kogarah as the railway line was closed between Central and Kogarah. At Loftus Brian Polton and John Jansons were waiting for us, wondering why we were half an hour late. We were surprised to see Brian had only a small day pack. It turned out he had to work on Sunday so he decided to join us for the Saturday.

At the Information Centre at Audley we found that only the leader of the party had to carry a permit, but the permit is only valid until 31st March 1992. It makes one wonder what is going to happen after that date. I also picked up a permit for the Heathcote National Park to cover my "Kingdom Come" trip on 14/15 March.

The cloudy morning was ideal for walking and we enjoyed Lady Carrington Drive. We had a drink at Jersey Springs and a late morning tea at Calala. Lunch was beside the rock overhang on the Walumarra Track. At Garie Trig Brian left us and headed for Otford. We took the service trail to the Curra Moors Track and had afternoon tea beside Curra Brook. A short scrub bash through burnt banksia brought us to our campsite on Curracurrong Creek at 3.50 pm. Once the tents were up there was swimming in the beautiful pool below the waterfall. This is the waterfall near Eagle Rock. A bit of exploring revealed even better swimming pools and campsites but we were comfortable where we were. I shall probably camp at the other place when I do my 22/23 February walk.

Wood fires are not allowed in the Royal, but John used solid fuel tablets to boil a brew of tea and cook his dinner. The rest of us had food that didn't need cooking (or was pre-cooked). It was a beautiful evening and we didn't miss a fire. We lay on the warm sandstone with the creek flowing around us and sipped our rum while the wattle birds plunged into the creek to cool off. The wattle birds made a lot of noise before they settled down for the night, and the only noise after that was the occasional "bonking" of the bonk frogs.

On Sunday morning there was swimming in the waterfall pool, very refreshing, and a leisurely breakfast. We eventually set off for Bundeena at 10.44 am. Morning tea was at Curracurrang where we saw a lot of litter and several groups of campers. At Wattamolla we had drinks and ice-creams before heading for Little Marley and lunch. After lunch and swimming John headed for a beer at Bundeena and later caught the 4 pm ferry. Laurie, Rosemary and I weren't interested in a beer so we caught the 3 pm ferry.

It was a very enjoyable walk that revealed the wide variety of vegetation and terrain and scenery in the Royal National Park. Laurie has already booked on my next walk.

* * * * *

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS 1992

The following annual subscriptions were decided at the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 11th March 1992:-

Single Member	, , , , ,	\$ 30
Household	48
Non-active Member	9
" " " plus magazine	:	21
Magazine only	12

According to the Constitution subscriptions must be paid no later than six months from the beginning of the Club's financial year, i.e. 1st January. The Treasurer would appreciate early payment (see enclosed notice).

A TRAIN CALLED "STUMPY"

by Jim Brown

If you have watched - even in a half-hearted way - film releases of the past 5 to 10 years, you will know there is "A Fish Called Wanda". But did you know that once there was a train called "Stumpy"?

I suppose this doesn't seem to have much to do with bushwalking. In fact, I think that if I were Editor of our valued journal, I would be inclined to return this with (I hope) a polite rejection slip. However, at one time Stumpy had quite a deal to do with my going walking in the bush, although I doubt whether other walkers of that time shared my regard for him (or should it be "her"?...or "it"?).

It was well before I came to a bushwalking Club, and when I was just learning the mingled pleasure and labour of the game - this places it in the 1938-41 period. After studying old walks programs of that time, I realise that walkers who didn't have to work on Saturday mornings would take off, as they do now, on the Friday evening, travelling almost invariably by rail in those days; and would then walk out an hour or two and make camp in the bush.

However, knowing nothing of this, I was not impressed with the idea of going off on the Friday night and camping a relatively short distance from a town. Instead I looked for means of starting very early on the Saturday (or if I was on a spell of annual leave, at whichever daybreak seemed convenient). This was how I found Stumpy.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines "stumpy" as "thick-set, of small height or length", and this was true enough of the train so called - well, it was of short length anyway.

"Stumpy" was a bush boy and never came into the wicked City, so you had to go out a bit to find him. On week-days you could join a train leaving Sydney Terminal for Riverstone Meat Works at 5.30 am, and at Parramatta change to another outer suburban train which would take you to Penrith. No doubt the Meat Works train returned almost immediately as a morning peak-hour journey, conveying commuters from the Richmond line: similarly the Penrith train came back as a morning peak-hour trip. On Saturdays you could connect with Stumpy by catching a train about 5.40 am, stopping Strathfield, Parramatta, thence all stations to Penrith arriving about 7.5 am. There you would find "Stumpy", known by that name to most Railway staff and a good many residents of the Blue Mountain towns.

Six days a week, Mondays to Saturdays, Stumpy would push off from Penrith about 7.10 am and make his way up the Blue Mountains, calling at all stations, and finally ending his innings at Mount Victoria about 9.15 am. "Stumpy" because he consisted sometimes of four light carriages, on other days six equally light cars - a load of 100 or 150 tonnes behind the engine. When only four cars the locomotive was usually a "30" Class tank engine, similar to those handling outer suburban trains. A six-car set called for the larger "32" Class engine - a simple, rugged, reliable machine, then approaching 50 years of age, but still used commonly for shorter "country" trains. When the tank engine was used (and I never encountered Stumpy with a tank engine up front) the limited water endurance would have necessitated at least two 5-minute halts to top up. The "32" engine with its bigger tender-tank, normally watered once, at Lawson. Of course, at the time I am talking about, and for almost 20 years afterwards, steam locomotives handled virtually all railway traffic outside the Sydney suburban area, including any places west of Parramatta.

I was never able to work out why the train (Stumpy) was provided at all on Saturdays - at times I was the only passenger in a carriage with 48 seats. On week days, however, it left Penrith almost empty but from Springwood westward picked up quite a goodly crowd of school children for some private schools between Lawson and Blackheath, as well as many for Katoomba High School. Quite a mob would alight at Katoomba, leaving just a sprinkling for points west.

Stumpy had one other claim to recognition. Being such a short, light train, it had no need of a "bank" engine - an additional locomotive for the steep sections between Valley Heights and Katoomba, where the line climbed 2,000 ft in just over 20 miles - an average gradient of

1 in 53, with some pinches as severe as 1 in 31 or 1 in 33 - that was pretty close to the toughest grade you could expect a steam locomotive with a trailing load to surmount. This eliminated the time taken for coupling and detaching the "bank" engine, so Stumpy was ten minutes faster than any other "all stops" train.

In particular, I remember my last journey ^{on} Stumpy. It was in February 1941, and I had planned to reconnoitre the Mount Hay ridge out from Leura. The bush road then ended about 7 km out from Leura, and the rest of the way was along a lightly-forested ridge. I knew that near Lawson you got a good view from the railway out towards the ridge I aimed to follow, so I planted myself on the right-hand side, opened a window wide, and peered out.

The engine (3278 on this trip) watered at Lawson as usual, the lid of the tank was closed with a clang, the fireman returned to the cab, and the first beats of the exhaust ("I know I can, I know I can") sounded. A strong north-westerly gale was blowing in through my open window, and the hose from the loco. watering tower, caught in a savage gust, slapped against the side of the train and off-loaded several hundred litres over me, the seat and the floor of the coach. At least I was well-washed as I scrambled out dripping at Leura and started back down the Highway to the Mount Hay Road.

Ah, well, Stumpy, many a time you carried me when I was just beginning to find the great green/blue Wonderland. Requiescat in pace, Stumpy - or in the Australian vernacular - "You'll do me for a rough old mate".

* * * * *

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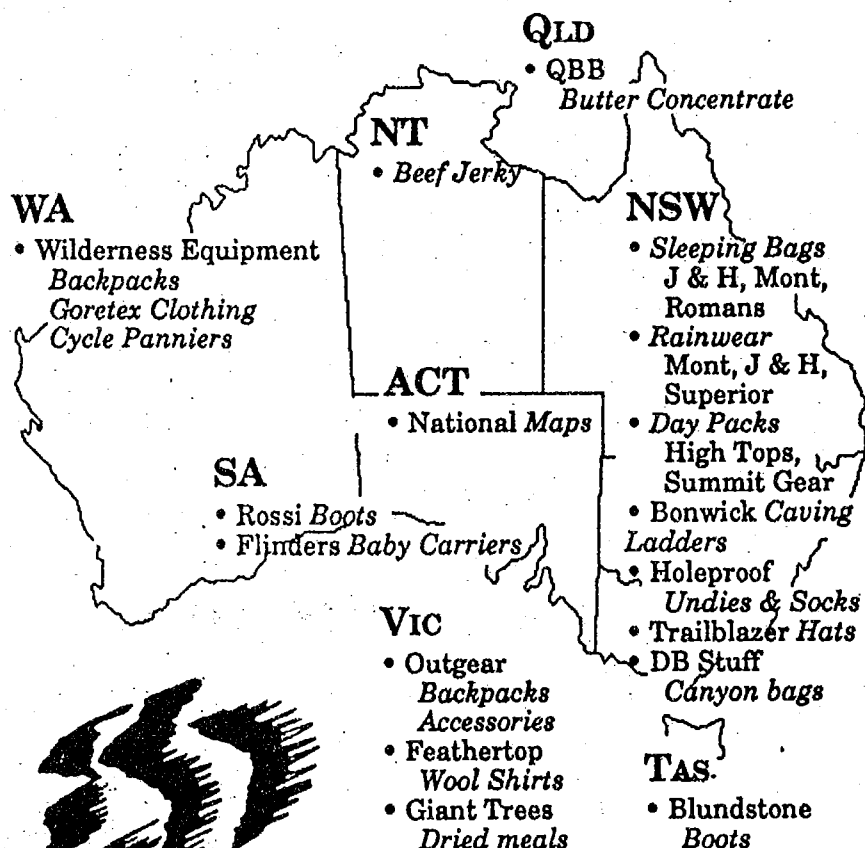
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THE FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

by Barry Wallace

So there we were folks, just 17 or so of us, with Bill Holland and Patrick James at the table and the time at 2015.

There were apologies from Michelle Powell and Helen and George Gray. The Minutes were read with Bill and Patrick doing a sort of "Mickey and Donald run a general meeting" act over the handwritten notes. Patrick became quite good at the two syllable words after a while, and was just settling down nicely when he reached the end of the minutes.

New members Ann Davidson, Jan Hodges, Marella Hogan, Peter Lafferty, Diane Mather and Louise Sylva were welcomed to full membership with Bill displaying a degree of discrimination that would be not approved of in some quarters.

Correspondence brought letters from Lithgow Council, from Paddy Pallin Adventure shops offering to provide speakers to address our gatherings, from the Hon. Auditor - a letter of congratulation on the quality of the accounts presented for audit, to Lithgow Council, to the Director of the Department of Planning and the Environment, to the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs advising them regarding our delegates, to Mr Sheerlock advising him of the results of the raffle of the painting which he donated and to one of the NSW Government Ministers.

The Treasurer's Report (did Erith day "boring") brought news that we received income of \$71, and spent \$892 (or \$961 if we include Coolana). The closing balance was \$2,062.

Next came the Walks Report. We began with the weekend of 17,18,19 January with David Rostron leading a party of 14 through Morong Deep in what was described as the best weather. There was also a rather confused story about David and a black snake, dancing, a tango, I think they said. Ian Debert cancelled his Kangaroo Valley canoeing trip, Jim Callaway reported 19 and a half starters on his Bundeena to Otford walk, and Greta James reported steamy (?) conditions for the 15 walkers who went on her Kanuka Brook - Campfire Creek trip. The description of this area as pristine on the walks program does leave one wondering.

The following weekend saw Brian Holden, that recently come-out chauvinist petrol-head, leading a party of 13 into the Shoalhaven River valley. They reported some difficulties in seeing-off a rather too frindly goanna who persisted in searching the camp for goodies. There was no report of Dick Weston and Kanuka Brook exploring bludge weekend, but Alan Mewett reported 19 starters enjoying a pelasant day on his Brooklyn to who-knows-where swimming day walk.

The weekend of 31 Jan, 1/2 February brought out Jim Rivers with a party of 19 on his Wollongambe Wilderness trip persevering through initial drizzle and fog which later cleared to warm conditions. Keith Docherty reported that the 4.5 starters on his Loftus to Bundeena weekend walk found the going tough. The 0.5 was Brian Bolton we are told. Peter Christian's ongoing series of Canyon trips saw a party of 6 going through Galah Canyon on the Sunday. The Saturday session in Heart Attack Canyon was cancelled, possibly for health reasons. Wilf Hilder reported a warm but pleasant day for the 29 people who came along on his Great North Walk Stage 2 - Chatswood to Thornleigh.

If one is to have a definitive wet weekend then 7,8,9 February would have to have come close. It rained and rained. Greta James and the advance guard of her Zobels Gully trip reached Newnes through dense fog on the Friday night, slept on the pub verandah through the steadily increasing downpour, and went home in the morning. Kenn Clacher cancelled his Bell Canyon trip for similar reasons. Not to be outdone Errol Sheedy and Alan Mewett also cancelled their day walks. All of which brought the Walks Report to a soggy finish.

There was a Conservation Report and a Confederation Report.

General Business saw passage of a motion that we repair or replace the screen we use to view slides. After a number of announcements, most of which are out of date by now, the meeting closed at 2112.

* * * * *

TO TREK OR NOT TO TREK

by Gordon Lee

For those trying to make up their minds, here is some useful information which may help you decide. The facts and figures quoted are the result of literally painstaking research carried out in Kathmandu in September, 1991. The estimated inflation rate in Nepal is 15%, so add that to the calculation you make for 1992. All monies quoted are converted to AUS dollars at the exchange rate current in 1991. These rates are listed at the end of the article.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:-

1. Mr A.G.Punt, President of the Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN)
2. Interviews with four separate Trekking Agencies.
3. Prices Brochure from the Royal Nepalese Airline.
4. Tourist Information Centre, Kathmandu.
5. Information gleaned personally.

From the President of TAAN I was given the list of Agencies in that organisation as at September 1991 and will gladly check an Agency for you if you ring me on (043) 88 5589.

As I see it there are three ways of going about it:-

DOING IT ON THE CHEAP (1)

Organise a bunch of buddies - you get a better discount on airfares that way - then go see a few travel agencies, get their best offer on the flight. There will be an overnight stopover in Bangkok on the way out.

BANGKOK. I can only recommend one hotel, The Liberty, 215 Pratipat Road (Baht 559 - A38 dbl) with a good cheap restaurant. If you are travelling with someone who knows their way around Bangkok then Khao San Road is cheaper where you can get reasonable accommodation for between Baht 80 to 200 (Aus 5/10 dbl). What you choose will depend on budget, luggage, knowledge, etc.

Getting there and back from the Airport can be a problem. Some of the choices are:-

1. Taxi. You shouldn't pay more than B120 (Aus \$6) to Liberty or B200 (Aus \$10) to Khao San.
2. Mini Bus. These come in about every hour and could cost up to 860 (Aus \$3). If you are going to Liberty then a Fax to that hotel could possibly arrange transport.
3. Local Bus. These are the cheapest. Taking these will depend on the amount of gear you are carrying and knowing how to get where you want to go.
4. Trains. There are two, Ordinary and Special. The station is just "across the road" from the airport. The Special costs Aus \$4 and the Ordinary Aus \$2. These take you to Hualamphong Station (Central - Bangkok). You have to know how to get to where you want to go from there. Take Tuk Tuk or Taxi.

When you get through the airport check, take the MAP offered to you as you leave the airport. This may help you get round the city. When you get outside there will be lots of hotel touts lined up with boards announcing their hotels. Look for Annapurna Lodge or Hotel New Ganeesh. Both are clean and cheap. Annapurna Lodge R120 (Aus \$3.20) New Ganeesh R450 with breakfast (Aus \$12). These prices are for doubles with bathroom and toilet attached. Singles are 75% cheaper and both singles and doubles with communal bath and toilet are cheaper still.

THE TREK. You can trek on your own but your choice of routes is limited. The "popular" routes have lodges and "tea houses" along the way where you can get food and accommodation. These include Everest Base Camp, treks out of Pokhara to Annapurna Base Camp, Ghorapani and the Tomsom Trail etc. These are the long ones. There are shorter - enquire.

Going on your own may mean the hiring of porters and/or a guide. Remember NOT to hire them "with food" for you will have to pay for it. When you are paying for it, boy can they eat, so strike a rate "without food". Also solo can be more expensive. Single rooms can sometimes be as dear as a double if you are paying for the room only.

THE MIDDLE RANGE (2)

All as for the foregoing. Again a group is cheaper on airfares.

When you have settled down in Kathmandu, go to several trekking agencies and enquire as to

the possibilities - choice of treks, conditions and prices. It helps if you know something about the country and where you want to go. Another suggestion is that if you have six people, why not split into three groups and with a similar set of questions three agencies can be consulted at once, then compare notes and decide. The going rates vary from \$US 35 to \$US 70 per day, from basic accommodation to deluxe - tables and chairs and showers each night. \$US 40 seems to be a good basic price.

Climbing can be arranged at a little extra cost. An example of cost is given below:-

MAKALU AND EVEREST BASE CAMP - Approximately 30 days.

Fly from Kathmandu to Tumlingtar	\$US 44	
Trek 30 days @ \$US 40 per day	1,200	
Trekking Permit approx.	15	
Fly out Lukla	77	
Spending money (less \$77) optional (In small denomination Rupees)	50	
	<u>\$US 1,376</u>	(Aus \$1,840)

Don't forget that these prices will be subject to inflation as stated in Nepal in 1992. So it would have been possible to do this trek in 1991 for approx. Aus. \$ 4,000. This of course is without food, sundry fares and any purchases for extra clothing, gifts etc, but DOES INCLUDE - Air fare, Trek fees, Airport tax, one week's accommodation in Bangkok and Kathmandu and taxi to and from Bangkok to airport. Don't forget Health and Travel Insurance.

DEAREST (3)

Go through a Trekking Agency in Australia. This will relieve you of any running around doing-it-yourself-activity but, as you will find out, it will cost. Stay with the RECOGNISED Agencies.

BEWARE of "Privateers" or "Semi-Commercials" who may offer prices which seem to be better than those of the recognised Agencies for they may not be as attractive as they are presented. Check with what is contained here or with me on the number previously quoted.

REGARDLESS of whether you go with a recognised Agency, Privateer or Semi-Commercial Organiser be sure that you get contracts for all the conditions that apply, such as refund in case of cancellation (very important), what exactly the trekking fees cover, whether the accommodation charges are reasonable etc.

(NOTE: \$US 1 = \$Aus.76 cents = Baht 25 = Nepalese R 49 (black) R 42 (official))

* * * * *

SOCIAL NOTES

On March 25th there will be a Safety & Leadership Workshop - for past, present and future Leaders as well as followers - we all have something to learn.

15th April - Slides with a difference - Les Simmons. Great slides of those special moments at dusk and dawn plus bush and sports photography.

22nd April - "Wilderness Protection & Management in the State of N.S.W." A talk by Keith Muir of the Colong Foundation.

Peter Christian will show an audio visual with large screen - Tasmania from mountains to sea visiting 7 Nation Parks. On 29th April.

On 15th April meet for dinner 6.30 pm at the Thai Restaurant just down from the Clubroom. The restaurant is upstairs.

CONFEDERATION OF BUSHWALKING CLUBS NSW INCORPORATEDMinutes of General Meeting 18th February

by Spiro Hajinakitas

Insurance

A Motion was passed that will add \$0.25 per Club Member to the cost of both Public Liability and Sports Accident Insurance and the money will be set aside to a special account to be used as an Insurance Sinking Fund.

Search & Rescue

A Motion was passed to set up a sub-committee to review and make recommendations on the future direction of Search & Rescue, particularly in relation to its continued membership of the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association. This has become necessary as in recent times regional Police have not called upon "outsiders" for assistance, preferring to use their own local people and any available helicopters.

It was reported that the unfortunate Newcastle Bushwalker who drowned in Wollemi Creek earlier this year on his first Club trip was an excellent swimmer, a swimming instructor no less. At the time of the accident he was wearing a cheap tight-fitting rucksack which was extremely difficult to remove, and may have been a factor contributing to the tragedy.

Conservation

Confederation is to urge the Government to ensure the appointment of members to the National Park Advisory Committees does include a member of Confederation, particularly Royal, Deua, Morton and Blue Mountains.

Confederation also is to suggest to the Government that a guaranteed minimum percentage of the State Budget be allocated towards Conservation.

Publicity

An official list of spokes people has been appointed to be on call in answer to requests from the media for radio interviews, television appearances and press interviews.

Newsletter

It is hoped that the "Bushwalker" will soon be printed.

General Business

The "Keyhole" section of Claustal Canyon is partially blocked and it now requires an abseil from a higher point.

Peter Treseder has been awarded an Order of Australia.

Confederation has donated \$250 to support the Environment Liason Officer work in the NSW Parliament.

* * * * *

S.B.W. EQUIVALENT OF 'COLUMN 8'

At the last Red Cross Blood Bank Presentation of Badges on Friday, 6th March 1992 S.B.W. was well represented (unbeknownst to those concerned at the beginning of the evening): the first recipient (for 50 donations) was former President, Barbara Bruce; in the middle (for 75 donations) was Presidential nomination Ian Debert; and the last recipient (for 175 donations) was Jan Wouters.
(a friend of SBW)
