

**THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER** is a monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers Inc, Box 4476 GPO Sydney 2001. To advertise in this magazine, please contact the Business Manager.

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**THE SYDNEY BUSH WALKERS INCORPORATED** was founded in 1927. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening at 8 pm at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 16 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli (near Milsons Point Railway Station). Visitors and prospective members are welcome any Wednesday.

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**Conservation Secretary:** Alex Colley  
**Magazine Editor:** George Mawer  
**Committee Members:** Morie Ward & Annie Maguire  
**Delegates to Confederation:** Ken Smith & Wilf Hilder

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I was delighted to read Jim Brown's nostalgic article "The Whitest of White Ants" (April issue). It brought back so many memories for me, particularly the moment when I sang one of my ditties to the wrong tune! But of course we were all amateurs.

From 1952 to 1958 the Crown Street Composers (Malcolm McGregor, Jim Brown, Geoff Wagg and Don Mathews) presented SBW campfire audiences with a brilliant series of what came to be known as "The Chronic Operas". This was a golden age of SBW creative art of a type which will probably never be repeated. Jim Geoff and Don are still SBW members.

Is there an enterprising Director/Producer in the Club who has the talent and energy to resurrect the SBW Operas with a new cast? Please may he or she come forward.

**Frank Rigby,**  
**The Black Duke of Anthracite.**

- |                     |                                  |
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# BUSH SAFETY

Ray Hookway

The suggestions contained in Maurice Smith's letter in the April Bushwalker have merit, but I would suggest that what is required is not another sub-committee but one experienced Safety Officer attached to the main club committee.

As Maurice says our club has few incidents but our club Federation delegates are usually privy to incidents in other clubs, or with non club incidents where the Federation S & R is involved.

The safety officer can liaise with Federation delegates, walk leaders and others and the outcome can be discussed in full committee. The walks secretary, the membership secretary and the magazine editor can then all be involved and the time of club officers can be better used.

The results of the safety officer's investigations could then possibly be used when talking to prospective club members in committee, to determine their knowledge about walking safety issues.

Whilst I have been on trips where the party has become temporarily displaced and I know of trips that have become benighted I cannot recall any incident where a club walks leader has required outside assistance to effect the rescue of a lost walker.

Incidents involving walk members who have become separated from the main party have usually resulted from people not following basic rules which are already clearly set out in our literature and possibly could not have been avoided without the use of a leash.

Most accidents can be prevented and I consider that one way must be to vet more closely the gear carried and the shoes worn on walks by prospectives (and by some members).

Most exhausted prospective or visitor incidents with which I have been involved have usually involved heavy packs filled with unnecessary extras and heavy clothing and utensils. Tiredness can lead to carelessness and to accident and injury.

Modern jogging and sporting footwear, designed more for show and for comfort on city streets, with almost non-existent tread and useless on the slippery rocks of a mountain creek or steep rocky hillside, should be strongly discouraged in the prospective notes and at the club, not at the start of a walk.

I remember an incident where a night time fall from Merrigal resulting in a broken ankle and a police

rescue, was attributed to the then popular ripple soled shoes.

New members should be instructed in the dangers of falling rocks and that the best way to descend a rocky slope is for the party to stick close together to avoid injury from dislodged rocks.

Most incidents can be prevented by the exercise of caution and commonsense. To cross a river during or after heavy rain on its catchment with the knowledge that it must be recrossed to return home is foolhardy as it could put the party at risk, but it has been done with a resulting involvement in helicopter rescue.

In summary I agree with Maurice that we should learn from the few accidents which occur and ensure that such incidents are minimised by better walker education and by closer surveillance and guidance of new members. □

## Readers please note

Morie Ward has been appointed Club Safety Officer. It is requested that any incident be reported to Morie as soon as practicable after your walk.

## Change notice: Social Calendar

The evening of May 31st listed for a talk by John Hogan on First Aid Improvisation, will instead now be a slide show hosted by John. The slides to be shown are those taken by several Club members while walking in the Mt Aspiring area of New Zealand in February of this year.

## Magazine Deadline

Contributors are reminded that the magazine goes to the printers on the second Thursday of the month. Please get your copy to me as early as you can. Note that some items of general interest will sometimes be held over for future use so if your article doesn't appear in the very next edition, don't worry, it will show in due course.

Thanks Ed



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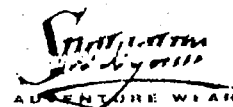
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## ST JOHNS FIRST AID COURSE FOR SBW MEMBERS

We are planning to run a first aid course for SBW members and prospective members over a weekend in August (tentatively 12th/13th August).

This will result in St Johns First Aid certification for members attending the course. The instructor will be a bushwalking member of Confederation, Dave Shepherd. He is an accredited instructor who regularly conducts first aid courses for The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs. Dave will give emphasis in this course to first aid problems encountered in the bushland remote areas.

The cost to our members will be \$58, a substantial discount on the normal cost of \$125. This will only be possible if we get a reasonable advance booking for the course but numbers will have to be limited as well.

To make it a fun weekend, as well as an instructive weekend, we are offering our home as the venue, possibly with a barbecue on Saturday evening. You can stay overnight for an early start on Sunday morning.

We are seeking expressions of interest at this stage but a \$20 deposit will secure your place in what is expected to be a popular course.

Please phone Fran or Bill Holland on (02) 484 6636.

## Highlights of the April Confederation meeting.

1. Although the incorporation of the Rocky Creek canyon into Wollemi NP was announced by the then Premier (Fahey) in the week prior to the State election it was not actually declared. Confederation's Conservation officer to seek its declaration.
2. Dunlop Volley International - Maurice Smith has spoken with Dunlop, and has been assured that Volleys will continue to be produced by Dunlop, with some internal reorganisation of how they are assembled and marketed within Dunlop.
3. Acknowledgment received from NPWS of receipt of Confederation's letter objecting to licensing of horse use in Kanangra Creek.
4. Newhaven Gap road (Budawangs) - the gate at Sassafra is not locked although the appearance is deceptive. The grading of the road has made it good two wheel drive access.

5. Letter from the Director General NPWS (Kruk) re discussion with Confederation - she expresses interest in meeting with Confederation. Andy McQueen, Maurice Smith, Roger Lembit, Andrew Cox suggested a delegation to represent Confederation. Conservation officer to seek a meeting as soon as possible.

6. Letter from Civil Aviation Authority - that the impediment to increasing the height of Fly Neighbourly agreement is problem of airspace above, that paramount priority of CAA is safety.

7. Sydney Water project final report is now available.

8. Mushroom Fertiliser Composting plant proposal - the proposed open air plant would be sited on a Wollemi NP inholding and be a major threat to the water quality of Wollemi Creek. Currently the Wollemi Legal Defence Fund is attempting to ensure that an EIS has to be done for the proposal. Motion: "that Confederation donate \$500 to the Wollemi Legal Defence Fund"

9. Royal NP - on the weekend before Easter it was announced that all foot tracks in the Royal NP are now open except those around National Falls.

10. Confederation Levies - letter from SBW re striking different levies for clubs that have their own arrangements for public liability insurance cover and those who don't. This arrangement already exists. a sheet explaining the levies has been sent to SBW.

Ken Smith.

## Stop Press - The Great South Walk Is On Its Way Again!

PLEASE ADD TO YOUR WALKS PROGRAM.

May 27th & 28th Great South Walk Stages 15 & 16.  
Moss Vale - Mt Broughton - Exeter - Saxwells  
Tramway - Ringwood Pass - Ogdens Rest - Glow  
Worm Glen - Dimmocks Creek - Riverview Lookout -  
Nicholas Pass - Fairy Bower Falls - Bundanoon Creek  
- Gamble's Lookout - Bonnie View Lookout - Mount  
Carnarvon - Constitution Hill - Bundanoon.

Maps: Bundanoon and Moss Vale.

Distance: 34km. Grade - Medium.

Train: The Canberra Xplorer-departs Central 7.43am for Moss Vale. (Booked seats only).

Leader: Wilf Hilder. 228 6131.

## HONORARY ACTIVE MEMBERS

### BILL AND FRAN HOLLAND

At the Annual General Meeting in March 1995 the President announced that the committee had offered Honorary Active Membership to Bill and Fran Holland which they have accepted with pleasure. There was great applause at the meeting, as Club members seemed quite gratified that this honour had been given to Bill and Fran who have worked so hard for the Club during their 16 years of membership.

Honorary Active Membership is held by only a few members, and is similar to life membership in some other clubs. The total number of Honorary Active Members (including Bill and Fran) is now thirteen. Bill has worked consistently for the Club since he joined. Most of the work he has undertaken has been very time consuming.

The following are positions that he has filled:-

New Members Secretary   Social Secretary   Treasurer   Vice President   Public Officer  
President   Walks Secretary   New Members Secretary (at present)

In addition he has answered phone questions about the Club, has led many walks on every program, and has conducted Instructional Weekends which are a great help to prospective members.

The latest big job that both Fran and Bill have undertaken is to collate the magazine, walks program, annual reports etc. Unless you have attended one of these evenings you would have no idea of how much work is involved. Fran has also had to post the magazines etc.

Fran has also worked hard for the Club in many ways. Early on she gave us professional advice when we bought our first printer.

After she and Bill were married she helped him with all his many jobs, especially answering phone questions about the Club. And of course being hostess to many members who finish a walk at the Holland's place, as well as on the magazine nights. In addition she has been on committee as Social Secretary and Public Officer (at present). She has also led many walks on the Walks Program.

Honorary Active Membership is a way for the Club to say "ThankYou" to some of the people who have worked for the Club over many years, as has been done by Bill and Fran.

The Honorary Active Members are:-

Dot Butler   Alex Colley   Jim Brown   Kath Brown   Bob Younger  
Christa Younger   Bill Bourke   George Gray   Helen Gray   Spiro Hajinakitas  
Barry Wallace   Bill Holland   Fran Holland

\*\*\*\*\*

## FROM THE CLUBROOMS

**Jan Roberts**

Last months' Wednesday evenings at the Clubroom were once again well worth making the effort to leave the home fires burning and travel to Kirribilli for. Our presenters in April covered the challenges of high altitude climbing in the Himalayas and capturing native birds on film.

### AUSTRALIAN ASSAULT ON MAKALU - April 19

At the commencement of his slide show on the Australian ascent of Mt. Makalu in 1994, Warwick Paton bought along some of the equipment necessary for climbing in these extreme conditions. Huge insulated snow climbing boots, down bodysuits, ice axes and crampons were examined by club attendees on the night, who grappled with understanding how it was possible to keep both warm and mobile at the same time.

Quite apart from his spectacular slides taken on the ascent of Makalu, Warwick's presentation covered the logistic nightmare involved with getting seven climbers up the mountain, and the vast resources needed to make it all happen. From a health perspective falling over the side was only one of the hazards faced daily, with other risks including frost bite and potential retina damage. An expedition of this type also needs sponsors to help fund the serious costs involved. Add to this the organisation required to hire and manage 90 support staff over the three months it takes to complete the ascent, and this is definitely not a trip for the faint hearted!

Finally the expedition got under way with the climbers arriving at base camp to wait out the two months required to acclimatise their bodies to the altitude changes. Seeing the slides of this rocky, uninviting camp site, Maurice Bloom (co-worker of Warwick's) commented that it would take the first month just to get the tent pegs in the ground! We all could relate to that problem.

As one of four teams climbing Makalu in 1993, Warwick's group was plagued with harsh weather conditions that signalled an early winter, and suffered many setbacks to their schedule. Finally, at 24,500 feet the attempt was aborted due to the high risk of avalanche which followed heavy snow falls in the area. Undaunted however, the group sought and was given permission to climb via an alternative route with the last days of autumn dwindling away. For those members still considering a Makalu ascent at this stage, the cost to climb Makalu was \$US8,000.

Warwick's presentation bought with it new insights for many of us on the challenges and dangers encountered

with outdoor adventures of this calibre. Thank you for an excellent evenings' entertainment Warwick, and we look forward to hearing more about your 1997 expedition to ski Makalu ridge, and hope next time it meets with the success your energy and dedication deserves

### AUSTRALIAN BIRDS - APRIL 26

Jim Lawler's slide presentation was also breathtaking but for different reasons on the 26th of last month. As a long time member of the Australian Photographic Association, Jim's slides of our native bird life was both artistic and entertaining.

Clearly a man of enduring patience and a keen eye for good composition, Jim's many years of hiding in the bush with his camera were appreciated by the SBW members amongst us who find bird photography the ultimate in frustration. We were treated to many close up shots of our often elusive native bird population, and in many cases able to view newly hatched chicks in their nests. It was not surprising to learn that it sometimes took Jim and his wife up to 3 days to achieve the perfect photograph.

Many of us wondered how many times we had in the past stepped over (and hopefully not on) the nests of our smallest birds who tend to prefer to build their nests in dense grass patches. Throughout the night Jim challenged us to find the illusive nests in his slides, a task made easier with practise.

Thank you Jim for demonstrating what can be achieved with a good camera, lots of time and talent and empathy for the subject being photographed. We'll keep practising.

### AND THIS MONTH.....

#### **DOT BUTLER in the Andes, and the SBW TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND - FEBRUARY '95 - SLIDE SHOW**

Just a quick reminder that Dot Butler will be presenting to the club on the 17th of May on the 25th Anniversary of the Andean Expedition. Always a delight to listen to, Dot will relate the events that led up to the trip, and her amazing experiences in being part of the first ever Australian expedition to the Andes. A night not to be missed!

Finally Tom Wenman, leader of the SBW New Zealand walk in the Mt Aspiring National Park last February, will present the groups' slides on the 31st of May. This promises to be a great night with the rest of the group attending to inject their own experiences to the evening's entertainment.

**NOTE:** The First Aid Improvisation demonstration advertised to be presented by John Hogan on the 31st of May will be rescheduled later in the year

## PROSPECTIVES TRAINING WEEKEND AT "COOLANA"

Both experienced and new members are encouraged to attend the training weekend scheduled in the Winter Walks programme for 17th/18th June. This will be held on the Club's property "Coolana" in the beautiful Kangaroo Valley. Training will be given in map reading, bushcraft and first aid, offering you an opportunity to gain knowledge sufficient to meet the Club's prerequisite for moving to full membership. It will not be all work. The property offers some delightful bushwalking and there will be time for a swim.

Assistance from experienced members would be appreciated. This is an opportunity to pass on knowledge to prospective members.

There is a shelter shed near the campsite and cars can be parked a handy distance away. Therefore there is no need to have camping gear or large packs. Just bring along a sleeping bag (or blankets) and a foam mat to sleep on. Tents are optional. You will have to provide your own meals and cooking gear. There will be breakfast for Sunday, lunch for both Saturday and Sunday and dinner for Saturday night. Don't forget a few snacks and we like to have a community happy hour (a drink and nibbles) before dinner on Saturday.

Family groups are welcome. Transport is by car leaving early Saturday morning. We plan to share vehicles so please let me know if you have your own transport or need a lift.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND please phone to me on 484 6636 (h) or 925 3309 (w) early in the week commencing 12th June.

**Bill Holland**

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## **The Art (flowing with the map) and The Science (theorising expected features) of route finding with map and compass.**

Ken Smith

It started last September when I was planning the route for a walk on the Labour Day in October. My problem was that I wanted to have a morning tea break at one lookout and lunch at another lookout, but there was a road between them that could be walked in about twenty minutes. So I decided to head into the bush to fill up some time, and to add some purpose to the scrub bash I decided to encourage everyone to at least handle both map and compass.

Now my expectations were way out of line. I had split the large party up into smaller groups of half a dozen or so and we went our separate ways. As it was we only completed the first leg of the exercise and even then we ended up half an hour later for lunch than I had intended. For a considerable time I had managed to mislay some 75% of the original party, and as a relative newcomer to leading walks I am still very much aware that the maximum allowable loss is 10%. So for me the navigation exercise was a bit of a debacle but there was quite a degree of enthusiasm among the participants for the practical nature of what we had done and it seems that quite a bit of instruction had been given in the groups. This Autumn I have on the program two similar day walks with a focus on route finding. The first was on April 25th, the next on May 28th. These days are in no way certificated navigation courses and my aim is not to impart technical concepts but to give participants some experience and confidence in handling both map and compass and in recognising basic topographical features both on the ground and as represented on the map.

Skilled route finding is essential for safe off trail travel. Route finding is the key to wandering at will through the bush and involves determining one's present position and the location of an objective, and of steering and following the route between those two points. The development of skill in route finding is very largely a matter of experience as the basic tools and procedures can be quickly mastered.

A map is a symbolic representation of an area. Topography is the description of the earth's surface. Land forms are reliable route finding features as they vary little over time. The value of an accurate topographical map lies in the ability it gives one to predict features of the terrain by looking at the general shape of a group of contour lines on the map. A map and compass are the usual tools used in bushwalking route finding but with the benefit of prior knowledge of an area both map and compass can be superfluous in route finding. Most bushwalking route finding is done by inspection, that is, by looking at the surrounding terrain and relating what is seen to prior knowledge of the locality or to features

described on a map. In unknown terrain or where features are not apparent, either because there are none or where they exist but are not visible because of weather conditions or scrub, it can be necessary to resort to the use of a compass as well as the map.

With good maps bushwalking route finding can be easy and exact. But in order to make any sensible use of a map, one must know one's current location as represented on the map. Although it is sometimes possible to combine the use of the map and compass to locate one's current position, this is ideally done only when one is at an obvious feature with a couple of other obvious features that are on the map also visible. As these conditions rarely apply in bushwalking it is far preferable to keep in contact with the map at all times by employing enroute surveillance of features. "One only sees what one looks for, and one only looks for what one knows about."

It is important to have a recognition of how significant a feature must be to appear on a map and also how a significant feature will show up on a map. It is also important to stress the danger of over reliance on either map or compass. It is easy to stray if a compass is not used to confirm a direction ascertained from the map, but also it is unwise to blindly follow a compass bearing without taking note of one's apparent progress on the map.

Competitive navigation events are held, usually in the form of orienteering or rogaining. In orienteering, individuals find their way around a specified set of check points as quickly as possible using a highly detailed purpose made map. In rogaining, teams of two to five members try to score as many checkpoints as they can in a specified time, usually twenty four hours for championship events, and often using standard 1:25,000 scale maps. One of the advantages of these events for route finding is that as one locates each check point one is assured of one's location on the map. In bushwalking we don't have the luxury of artificial checkpoints to reassure us and instead we continually rely on our own skill to be sure we are correctly locating ourselves on our maps. My navigation exercises will be bushwalks; they won't use marked checkpoints.

The 32nd Paddy Pallin rogaine is being held about 1 1/2 hours drive north west of Sydney on Sunday June 4th. Suitable for beginners and experienced teams, it is a six hour event with a mass start at 9 am. Entry to the event costs \$20 per person and the closing date is May 22nd.

The search and rescue arm of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs is holding its annual "wilderness" rogaines on the weekend of June 24th and 25th this year. This event is particularly relevant to bushwalkers as it is held in the sort of country we use. Last years entry fee was about \$35 per team for the one-day (actually eleven hours) event.

I can be contacted on (02) 977 7403.

Ken Smith.



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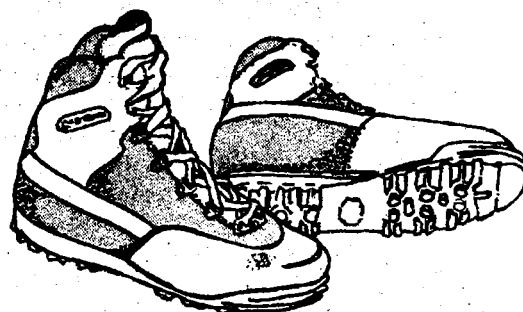


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## The Annual General Meeting.

The night was dark, warm, and humid as the president called the 40 or so members present to order at around 2012 and began the AGM. There were apologies from Don Finch, John Hogan, George and Helen Gray, Carol Lubbers, Edith Townsend, Chris Sonter, Peter Miller, Fran Holland, Joy Hynes, Mike Reynolds and Ainslie Morris.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and received with only a couple of minor corrections.

New members Miriam Kirwan and Sandy Larson were welcomed into full membership with a badge and a collection of documents that looked vaguely familiar to us for some reason.

Correspondence was comprised of letters from Confederation regarding their forthcoming day of meetings to determine a strategic plan for the organisation, from NPWS regarding their survey of Yengo National Park and Parr State Recreation Area, from Brian Saunders of NPA advising us of a submission on the Royal and Heathcote Parks he has sent to NPWS, and a letter from Careflight thanking us for the donation of \$200.

The annual reports were taken as read and received.

The treasurer's report and the financial statements were taken as read and received. The treasurer then moved that annual subscriptions be set at the same level as last year. After a few questions and some discussion this was passed. The meeting then passed a vote of thanks to the hon auditor for having once again audited the club's accounts.

It must have been around here somewhere that the traditional motion to permit the business of the meeting to proceed concurrently with voting to elect office bearers was passed. We also agreed on the method of counting votes for the various combinations of positions and contenders. It was all pretty breathtaking but it is after all yesterday's news, so we need not concern ourselves with the details.

The walks reports were next. Over the weekend of 11, 12 February all the folk who wanted to go on Greta James' trip down Constance Gorge had already done so, or missed out. It was moved forward one week. Wilf Hilder cancelled stages 19 and 20 of the Great South Walk but honour was saved (just) when Sandy Johnson led a party of 20 on his Sunday walk in Kuring-Gai Chase.

During the hours of darkness between 17, 18 February Ken Smith led a party of 3 on a somewhat re-routed version of his overnight day walk. Perhaps in a further

effort to avoid the heat they relocated the walk to Leura and walked out to Lockleys Pylon and back. It seems the moon was large, and provided diffused lighting through a light cloud cover. Bill Holland's more conventional day walk on the Saturday attracted 25 starters in fine conditions. It was the general belief of those present at the meeting that Maurie Bloom's Saturday cycling trip went, with 4 starters but there were no other details. Kenn Clacher described his Sunday trip down Bowens Creek North Branch as a terrific enjoyable trip for the 10 (would they be offended if we called them floaters, do you think?) who came along. Tony Maynes had 20 on his walk from Stanwell Park to Otford via the rocks. Conditions were overcast and not pleasant for swimming so they all caught the early train home.

Maurice Smith led a party of 16 in hot conditions on his Yalwal area walk over the weekend of 25, 26 February. The nights were pleasantly cool in contrast to the day temperatures. Ian Debert cancelled his Northern Suburbs day walk on the Saturday but Ken Smith's walk the same day went, with 13, or maybe 14 walkers, depending on when you counted. Peter Christian re-routed his canyon trip for the five starters who turned up on the Sunday to somewhere other than Koombanda Brook.

The weekend of 3, 4, 5, March saw Kenn Clacher and the party of 12 on his Wog Wog walk taking shelter in a cave around midday Saturday as the weather turned wet! wet! wet! They emerged from shelter on the Sunday to trudge (and wade) back to the cars and return home. Frank Sander's Northern Suburbs Saturday walk met with similar conditions for the 8 of the party who were determined enough to go. They lunched at Cheltenham railway station and finished the walk at Pymble station. They are now all experienced at walking in wet conditions. George Mawer cancelled his Pierces Pass walk on the Sunday due to the persisting inclemency and the fact that most of *his* starters were already experienced at walking in such conditions. Tom Wenman closed out the walks report by reporting that the party who walked in New Zealand in February/March experienced problems with sunburn and dry weather conditions. There was even some wild story about real mountains being superb.

The treasurer's report indicated that we received income of \$777, spent \$755 and closed the month with a balance of \$1,152.

Conservation report brought mention of the publication in the Sydney Morning Herald of a report on progress in the move to declare the Blue Mountains for World Heritage listing.

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< AGM meeting notes continued:

It seems it outlines government delays without end. The amount of Coolana income which remains uninvested at the end of each accounting year is to be documented, probably in the annual report.

Confederation report mentioned a letter from Fairfield Bushwalkers which proposes the abolition of the Confederation Search and Rescue section. Sydney Water Corporation is reported to be dumping sewage sludge in the Newnes forest area. Confederation are objecting strongly due to the contaminants found in Sydney sludge and the fact that this area drains into adjacent so far unpolluted areas. A letter to NPWS has evoked a reply indicating that the service is permitting horse riding up Kanangra Creek as far as Whalania Creek. Confederation will write seeking details of the service's policy on horses in National Parks. Work on reconstruction of tracks in the Royal has begun.

The motion to rename club office positions from those of secretary was discussed at some length and eventually deferred to the half yearly general meeting in September.

General business saw passage of a motion that the incoming committee plan for the club's 70 Th. anniversary celebrations. Mention was made of the efforts of Anne, Frank and Patrick in obtaining and installing the new gate at Coolana. There was also a motion of thanks to the outgoing committee, carried by acclamation.

After that it was a matter of the announcements and the meeting closed at 2153.

Barry Wallace

**Note:** My cancelled walk (which was from Mount Banks) was cancelled due to there being about a metre of fast flowing water through the small canyon that is a major feature of the walk, and that the higher (scenic) places were shrouded in low cloud. A little more rain wouldn't have hurt them.

Now that I come to think about it, it doesn't seem to rain like it used to. Or is it just that the wet weather gear is so much better?

Would someone like to write and tell us their story about "A Wet Weekend at ....."

Thanks, George Mawer.

## WOLLEMI THREAT

### Urgent: Bushwalkers & environmentalists!

**\* Help save Wollemi National Park from a huge fertilizer plant. Wollemi is the largest wilderness in NSW, home of the famous Wollemi pine, and only one hour from Sydney**

**\* Help keep clean the pristine waters of Grand Colo Gorge in the Wollemi Wilderness.**

Make donations urgently to - **"Wollemi Legal Fighting Fund"** 1A James Lane Sydney 2000 - whose supporters have already spent thousands of dollars in legal fees to stop a fertilizer plant near the pristine Wollemi National Park/Wilderness.

More information:  
Tom McLoughlin, tel. 02-267 7929.

This legal action is endorsed by Confed. of Bushwalking Clubs NSW, The Wilderness Soc., Australian Conservation Foundation, CHANGE, NSW Nature Conservation Council, Total Env. Centre, NSW Nat. Parks Assoc. & Colong Found. for Wilderness.



## Exposure (climatic hypothermia)

Hypothermia is the condition associated with lowered body core temperature, following subjection of the body to climatic conditions which cause severe chilling of the body surface (exposure). The body core is the brain, heart, lungs; these organs cannot function (and you die) if their temperature falls too low. Hypothermia, like shock, is far easier to prevent than to treat. Death as a result of hypothermia is **not an accident**.

## Prevention of exposure

This depends on sound planning, adequate training, appropriate clothing, appropriate equipment and thorough preparation **before** the trip.

Be prepared for bad weather conditions whatever the length of the trip, and pack accordingly. You must take waterproof and windproof outer clothing, and woollen clothes, mittens and balaclava. You should be aware of the need to put on extra clothing when necessary. Ideally, when clothed for extremes of cold in wet and windy conditions, only the face should be exposed. Remember that up to one third of the body's total heat loss can be through an unprotected head.

## RAFTING THE FRANKLIN

by David Lewis

(First printed in the magazine February 1985)

Rafting the Franklin is reputed to be a dangerous activity but as an issue, the Franklin has taken a far greater toll amongst politicians - many of whom have probably never ventured within a hundred kilometres of its rushing waters. After only a short time in the political arena, the Franklin claimed two governments, as the issue changed first the Tasmanian State Government, and then played a significant part in changing the Federal Government. The movement which formed to preserve this unique wild river swelled beyond anyone's imagination. Their cause won the strong support of vast numbers of Australians - most of whom gave their support in the knowledge that they would never directly experience the Franklin's rugged beauty.

Anyone who has been to south-west Tasmania will know that the region is characterised by contrasts and erratic weather. If anything is definite, it's rain; those who venture into the south-west can be sure that at some time in their trip it must rain. The Roaring Forties bring to Tasmania's central highland a climate of frequent rain, snow and sudden storms at all times of the year.

Draining from the lakes of the central highlands the Franklin River begins its 125 kilometre journey south towards its confluence with the Gordon River. Over its course, the Franklin passes through the world's largest remaining temperate rain forest and through one of its most spectacular ravines. There are no rivers like the Franklin left in Australia. Indeed, there are very few like it in the world. There are no towns or houses by its banks; there are no farms with domestic animals grazing nearby; no drains empty into it and, apart from the Lyell Highway, which crosses its upper reaches, no roads or railway lines run anywhere near it.

Yet the rafter can hardly begrudge the existence of the highway crossing, as it is from here that access can be gained to the river.

The journey down the Franklin commences where the Lyell Highway crosses the Collingwood River, the Collingwood being a substantial tributary of the Franklin. It was here that our party of seven set about packing, water-proofing and shock-proofing three weeks of equipment and supplies. A trip of this kind takes many months of organisation and preparation as all manner of contingencies must be accommodated. It is a trade-off, however, as the more you take, the more you reduce the buoyancy and manoeuvrability of the

inflatable rubber raft on which you rely to get you to the other end of the river.

This is my second journey down the Franklin (and my fourth trip into south-west Tasmania in as many years) but, nevertheless, preparations on this occasion proved to be just as demanding as before. Each member of the group made a paddle from aluminium tubing and marine ply covered with a thin protective layer of fibreglass. Three weeks of dehydrated foods had to be individually packed and water-proofed by copious layers of plastic bags. Recipes for trips of this type depend upon the imagination with which one can combine various dried vegetables with rice, lentils or pasta. The alternative is pre-packaged freeze-dried meals which have much the same impact on the digestive system as would a stick of gelignite. Meals are supplemented mainly by nuts, cheese, dried fruits, biscuits and chocolate.

Once food, clothing, raft repair kit, people repair kit and numerous other miscellaneous pieces of equipment have been assembled, the task is then to compress them, and their numerous layers of plastic coating, into a water-proof home brew barrel and a rucksack. All is then secured to the raft and covered by a spray sheet. If there are any leaks you can be sure that the river will find them. The rafter then applies his own protective coating; a wet suit, a buoyancy vest and a canoeing helmet.

The trip takes 14 days to complete but this can vary considerably according to weather conditions. The slightest rain can flood the river's narrow ravines and leave parties stranded for many days. Water levels must be monitored religiously.

Upon setting out, the rafter immediately disappears into a wilderness of green and misty valleys, canopied by the dense rainforest which crowds the Franklin's banks. There are rapids from the first stroke of the paddle and these give but a small taste of what is to come. For the uninitiated, the Collingwood provides a good introduction to the art of riding rapids as the river becomes progressively more challenging. A rafter soon becomes adept at dodging mid-stream boulders and logs. (Sometimes it seems there are as many logs in the river as beside it.) However, the river is a great equaliser and all rafters meet the challenge with mixed success; the last fatality on the Franklin was the drowning of a professional guide and yet the majority of people who have travelled the river have had no previous rafting experience.

After three days on the river, our party reached the Irenabyss (which means "chasm of peace".) Here sheer cliffs rise up hundreds of metres above the river to frame a narrow piece of sky. cont' page 14 >

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At this point, the Franklin is about five metres wide. Water moves slowly through this narrow channel (except after rain when precisely the opposite occurs.) The foam from the rapids upstream swirls calmly on its surface. The rafter is left with the impression that the ravine must be deep as it is high. It is hard to comprehend just how much water is flowing past with each passing second. For 10 or 15 metres above the water level the cliffs show no sign of vegetation, having been regularly scoured by floods.

In the course of our first three days on the Franklin, the cliffs that flanked us had grown - or, more correctly, we had dropped. The roar of rapids provided a constant reminder that the river was dropping into an ever deepening series of ravines - each one more spectacular than the last - as it carved its way through Tasmania's western ranges. By and large, our party had been successful in making its way through the rapids. So far, we had had only one puncture among the seven rafts; unfortunately, its position, near the join in an air tank, made it difficult to plug completely and so periodically this raft needed some pumping.

Each rapid, where the path is difficult or obscured, must be scouted before a decision is made as to how it would be best negotiated. This process invariably involves much rock climbing and scrambling through thick vegetation before a suitable vantage point can be reached. Then the deliberations begin as each member of the party attempts to predict where the river will take him and the potential pitfalls that such a course might present. Early in the trip, this process takes some time as the Franklin gives most rafters considerable cause for hesitation. But, of necessity, everyone soon learns how to assess a rapid. Usually, one of the more reckless of the party announces that he will "give it a go" and the others reserve judgement until they see how he fares.

The alternative to shooting a rapid is portaging. This often necessitates unpacking all gear from the raft, deflating it and humping the same over some fairly demanding obstacles before joining the river again. Often, safety necessitates portaging, but this is never an attractive option; it is certainly easier having a raft carry you than you having to carry it. In high water some rapids can take up to a day to portage.

From the Irenabyss, the river opens out slightly and the rapids appear less daunting as the rafter has become more adept at manoeuvring his bobbing yellow craft. This is grand river rafting country. There are no major portages to dampen the exhilaration generated as you glide through the rushing waters. The 25 kilometres to the Great Ravine is easily covered in two days.

The Grand Ravine is the most spectacular of the Franklin's gorges. It is impossible for any photograph to do it justice. Over the centuries, the river has cut a passage through the rock that is now 700 metres deep. From water level, the cliffs appear to soar to infinity and make the sky seem insignificant. The ravine is punctuated by four huge rapids. They are aptly named: the Churn, the Coruscades, Thunderrush and the Cauldron. All demand full or partial portage. They drop like four giant steps and divide the ravine into five long reaches - each of a grandeur that would compete with that of New Zealand's Milford Sound. The Great Ravine is 10 kilometres long and takes two to three days to negotiate in good weather. After rain, progress is impossible.

The Great Ravine is followed by two more long gorges before the last major rapid, Newlands Cascades, is reached. Newlands Cascades is a rapid that sends every rafter's adrenalin pumping. The river narrows into a 300 metre chute of foaming water containing six drops, each of about two metres. Skilful paddling will see a rafter through in about 30 seconds. It is quite a sensation.

After Newlands Cascades, the Franklin opens out. The low banks are crowded with foliage. The river widens and slows down as it moves more sedately amongst towering beech and blackwoods and the more stunted huon pines that surround it. The banks are lined with forests of huge tree ferns. Thirty-metre limestone cliffs, while less grandiose than what has gone before, nevertheless possess a haunting charm. Here we relax and drift with the current. There was an eerie feeling - as though we had left something behind. It was the silence. For ten days we had been accompanied by the inescapable roaring of rapids. Now at last the river was tranquil.

The lower reaches of the Franklin are characterised by their serenity. A party will spend two or three days here before reaching the Gordon and there will board the Denison Star - a tourist launch which will carry them over the last leg of the journey through Macquarie Harbour to Strahan, a fishing village on Tasmania's west coast.

In the afterglow, the words of Wilderness Society patron Yehudi Menuhin are worth reflecting upon:-

"We will not be judged in the future by our Gross National Product, we will not be judged even by our excursions to the moon, we will be judged by whether we have left this world habitable. The most wonderful things in the world have been achieved without the hand of man." □