



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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March 1996

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Join The Coolana Friends

By the time you read this, the noxious weed eradication spraying on the Coolana flats should be completed. For effective action, we should not disturb the sprayed weeds for three weeks - until the end of March.

During February a small but energetic group has cleared a grid of paths through the flats, cut and removed fallen timber, and, moving more easily across the flats, realised just how pleasant a place it can be.

Others have tackled the weeds elsewhere. around the shed and down the old road looks better already, whilst the grassy clearing below, weeded by the Hollands and Lorraine Bloomfield, just begs for a couple of tents.

Now, what should we do next? Well, a working bee on the flats from 30th March to 2nd April is planned, with a follow up 13-16th April if needed. Come for one day or come for all, but ring George Mawer first if interested. After that we are considering a long weekend, to cater for working people and retirees, over possibly the second weekend each month. Watch this magazine for details.

Of course, if you want to visit Coolana at any other time and do a bit for its future, do so, but perhaps check with Fran Holland or Jo Van Somers on where to put your efforts to best effect.

We have tasks for all types in the working parties.

Do you feel macho with a chain saw, or are you a put-upon beast of burden? There is a massive amount of fallen timber to be cut and stacked for future use.

Would you rather wander down the hill, sharp-eyed and methodical plucking small privet and other perennial weeds from the ground? Or wage war on the smothering Moth Vine, destroying it before its fruit ripens and disperses.

Don't know a weed from an endangered species? Let us introduce you to your own special weed and you can seek it everywhere.

You may prefer to 'Adopt a Plot' and make its restoration your own project. Discuss this idea if it appeals.

Of course, considerate souls, dispensing refreshing drinks and encouraging words are also welcome

What to bring? Chain or bush saws; secateurs; weeding aids and gardening gloves. Rakes may be useful and there will be 'Roundup' for the Moth Vine. Long trousers, boots and possibly gaiters when working on the Flats.

Endless love

George Mawer

It's very likely that you joined SBW to try a little serious bushwalking and now find that you stepped into a totally new life dimension. Some of it's been great no doubt and already you've experienced things that you'll carry in your treasured memories forever.

There are the sore feet at the end of a long hard day. Slogging up some of those hills that seem to go on for ever. Picking your way down down down until your trembling knees feel like jelly. The heat. The cold. A bed that's never quite comfortable. Getting up in the morning and having to put on the same cold wet socks that you took off to go to bed. The times you ask yourself incredulously "what am I doing here?". Prickly scratchy bushes. Wet slippery rocks. Icy water that you have to wade through. Slippery muddy boggy tracks. Heavy packs. The camp fire that's too big or too small or too hot for cooking or too crowded. Those big red (and black) bull ants. Leaches, ticks, smelly clothes, scratched legs, sunburn, windburn, stings and bites. Boring food. Trip sticks, cutting saw grass, leaking raincoats, cuts and bruises - the list goes on - and they're some of the good bits.

And still you love it.

The South Coast of Tasmania

Brian Holden

29/02/96

I was looking forward to getting back to Tassy since I rode about 500 km with 1200 cyclists (organised by Bicycle Victoria) last January. Cycling off the main roads in Tasmania nicely compliments bushwalking that charming little state. Hobart alone justifies a trip down there.

On January 5th, I and six friends got off a bus at Cockle Creek ranger station at the start of the south coast track. We had only a half day walk but packs were heavy and muscles were flabby. I was glad to get to the camp at Cape Rivulet. Early on day 2 we struck our first mud then some more and then more. If this was what was in store, it was going to be an exhausting bush walk! Camp was at Granite Beach. Much less mud on day 3 meant that I could start to enjoy myself. The camp was at Osmiridium Beach with a spectacular view of Precipitous Bluff. Occasional thoughts of Wade Butler were a bit sobering.

Day 4 was THE day. This was the day our leader seemed to be having sleepless nights over. This was the day we were to go over the Ironbonds. He had been mumbling for days earlier that when we got over that hurdle, he could rest in peace. The climb of 920 metres was a bit demanding with big views of the Arthurs, Mt Ann and Federation Peak. Then, on wobbly knees, down the same number of metres to the camp on Louisa River. What our leader was worried about was a change in weather. The Antarctic might be a long way away, but we were constantly aware that it was directly over the horizon like some lurking menace. We had by now perfect wether and our luck had to run out soon.

Camp on day 5 was at Cox Bight. Looking back it was the most memorable part of the whole trip. We had got to camp with plenty of time to spare. The colours of the late afternoon and evening brought back memories of the magic week I spent at Lake Pedder before the flooding. Subtle pinks and golds which could be unique to the sky in this part of the world. There was another reason to be satisfied. Tomorrow would be a straightforward walk up the valley to the hut and food drop at Melaleuca. Tomorrow night's dinner would have a few yummy things in it. ▷

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◁ Melaleuca was founded by the famous Denny King who lived there for 45 years mining tin. Only for a few of those years did he have his family there with him. To think that in the middle of the 20th century there could be but one man in such a magnificent and vast wilderness! His supplies were delivered by boat up Bathurst Harbour.

So day 6 ended in a hut with a table and a great swim in relatively warm fresh water off a jetty. The first section of our walk was over. Now we were to face the second where tracks were "negotiable routes". There must be a few kilometres of boardwalk on the South Coast Track. Boardwalks cost from \$40 to \$100 a metre to lay. If walkers keep coming there will be non stop mud from Cockle Creek to Melaleuca wherever there are no boards. The only solution are boardwalks financed by walkers staying in lodges and paying big money. That will mean the average walker will be excluded. The number of walkers has already reached its maximum as our group's 5 tents filled almost every camp site. Fortunately the traffic was evenly spread out along the way.

Our second stage was the South West Cape circuit. An easy walk got us into camp at New Harbour on day 7. Camp on day 8 was at Ketchen Bay and the next on day 9 at Wilson Bight. As we awoke to threatening weather on day 10, we decided to stay put at Wilson and get into the books we had been humping rather than do a planned side trip out to the end of the cape. There was still no rain. Our luck just had to run out soon.

Day 11 was the second hard day of the whole trip and had us up on the South West Cape Range in cold strong winds. It was bleak but dry. Just prior to the camp at Window Pane Bay there was some rock scrambling and for a few seconds at one point it was touch and go if I was to go to my maker. I was glad that day was behind me.

Camp on day 12 was behind Noyhener Beach which was the only beach we had struck which was just ordinary in appearance. The camp was "yet another five star" as they all had been. This was the last time I would be tenting and it was time to reflect on the overall quality of the walk. The Mountains are dramatic in shape as they are in New Zealand but have not the height and, therefore, the added effect of snow that that area has. However the pristine beaches compensate and, in my opinion, this part of Australia is the equal of the Milford Track. It was a lot more comfortable than the Milford Track as there

were no sandflies and the mozzies we came across did not bite.

Our third hard day for the whole trip was the dash for Melaleuca on day 13. It was an 11 1/2 hour day - made harder by poor visibility which had us doing some unnecessary climbing. We were able to pick up the Port Davy Track for the final 2 hours into Melaleuca which was a sure welcome sight. Day 14 was the day we had in reserve in case heavy rain confined us to our tents. We spent that day hanging around the settlement. Finally, we left Melaleuca airstrip on the 20th. in two small planes. It was a bumpy and nauseating flight back to Hobart which took us right over the top of Federation Peak. That night we had dinner at \$65 per head - which we agreed we deserved.

We had not experienced rain at all. As some locals were claiming that that was unheard of, I probably won't go back to repeat a walk which could never be as good. □

Is this the 'Last' Volley?

Len Hainke

"Shot! Another sizzling volley and Ken Rosewell sidelines Lew Hoard yet again!". Sounds like a familiar comment from the tennis scene of the '50's!

The other volley is the sandshoe that was king in those times and survived until 1993, being very popular with lightweight walkers including yours truly.

In that year the last Volley OC went 'over the baseline' and that was the end of wonderful sneakers, rubber plimsolls, sandshoes or whatever! We were assured that the infamous Volley International would go on for the "foreseeable future" - as a poor replacement. However the 'future' is a pretty variable thing and depends upon the colour of your politics - or is it your tennis socks!

February 1996 it is and International volleys are still with us. They look the same but what a difference! They are 180g (approx.) lighter - about 20% - mainly in the sole (where it hurts!) whilst the inner is a very squashy affair.

The sole transmits every roughness to the foot. They smell revolting (a different rubber vulcaniser) and should be kept out of tents and cupboards for that reason. ▷

◁ Is This The Last Volley

My (30 odd year) love affair with volleys is over. I lost the 'match' 2 rubbers to nil! I have 7 pair of OC's stashed away and will have to tread lightly to eke out the most mileage from them.

There is old stock of inters around but you will only find them in small volume shoe shops mainly in small country towns or the like. In the meantime the 'slipper' Inters - new stock - can be recognised by hand flexing the sole at the ball of the foot section - they feel thinner - the squashy inner and the smell are a dead giveaway! If in doubt take an old Volley with you.

The future? My guess is that we will see a new up market Volley with an image and price to match.

To mourn the passing of the famous Volley OC I can only quote the words of the 10th century Persian philosopher who did it in style when he drank and wrote the definitive last line.

"Sans wine, sans song, sans walker, sans shoe
sans end" ... Omar Khayyam .. (with apologies) □

Legal Aspects of Bushwalking Leadership

from "Bushwalking and Mountaineering Leadership" Handbook of the Victorian Bushwalking and Mountaineering Training Advisory Board. 1994 edition.

(Note: The following is a summary of the best advice available on this subject at the time of printing. The matters listed are those which leaders should take into account and on which, if necessary, they should seek professional advice before leading groups.)

Increased civil litigation in recent years combined with wider media coverage has been a significant factor in highlighting the responsibilities of leaders involved in outdoor activities. A leader who assumes responsibility for others, whether they be children or adults (walking clubs, friends, community groups, etc.), is subject to certain legal responsibilities. These responsibilities arise in a number of ways.

Negligence

Negligence is the omission to do something which a reasonable person would do or the doing of some act which a reasonable person would not do. For an

action to be brought in negligence, however, there must be a duty of care owed to some person accompanying the act or omission. The duty of care on the part of a leader is to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which he/she can reasonably foresee would be likely to injure persons who are closely and directly affected by them. The standard of care is that of a reasonable and prudent leader. Whether this standard has been breached is one of fact in the circumstances. For example, all the precautions and safeguards required to be taken by persons carrying out a surgical operation would not be required by a person rendering first aid at the scene of an accident, and the precautions required by a person having the care of adults will differ from those demanded by a person having the care of children.

An action for damages in negligence could be brought against a leader in circumstances where that leader owing a duty of care to some person has breached that duty by an act or omission which results in the death or injury to that person or loss or damage to his/her property.

It should be emphasised that a leader is not the guarantor of a party's safety although the law may hold that he/she owes a greater duty of care to a

party member because of his/her experience than a party member would to a fellow party member who may have little or no experience. No amount of expertise can hide the fact that outdoor activities are potentially dangerous and accidents can happen to anyone.

Contract

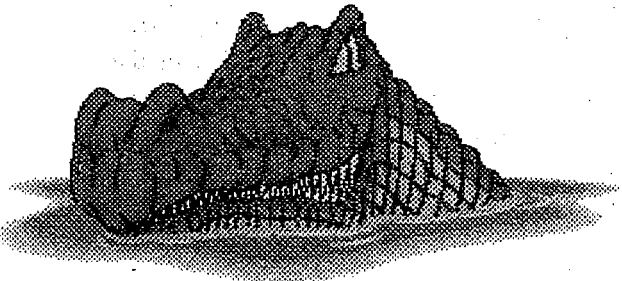
Legal liability may arise through breach of contract. An arrangement whereby a leader agrees to take a group on an outdoor activity for a price (that is, in return for payment), could be a contract. Such contract may have terms expressed or implied that the leader is competent and experienced, proper equipment provided, safe methods of operations used and necessary approvals obtained.

Breach of any of these terms may give rise to legal action. The contractual aspect of an activity should be considered when effecting insurance cover. □

FROM THE CLUBROOM

By Jan Roberts

Willis's Walkabouts - February 21



The original plan was for Russell to join us at the clubroom on his trip down south, and share some of the many walking tours he provides throughout the far north of Australia. As it turned out Russell was unable to join us, so Bill Holland volunteered to present Russell's slides as he and Fran had experienced many walks with Willis' Walkabouts in the past.

Bill was the accomplished tour guide throughout the presentation, and even managed to educate us about locations he and Fran are YET to visit.

Russell's slides took us on walks through rugged gorges to magnificent waterfalls, and often included visiting Aboriginal art sites in the Kakadu, Kimberley and Macdonnell Ranges.

For those interested in joining one of Willis' Walkabouts, there are many to choose from and all include walking with one or more experienced guides, tasty, lightweight and nutritious evening meals (which means your pack is lighter) and lots of time to walk and explore.

SBW members benefit not only by being able to walk with very capable kindred spirits, but also to enjoy special rates as members of the club.

For more information look for the advertisement in this magazine each month.

Thanks to Bill for understudying so willingly, and to both Bill and Fran for taking the time to put together the necessary slides for what was a great nights entertainment.

Walking with Athletes Foot - February 28

We had a change of program in February with Ione Dean heading off overseas on a spur of the moment business trip, but in her place the people from The Athletes Foot were happy to get a leg in and come to talk to SBW.

Samantha, Mat and Doreen from The Athletes Foot made a great start on the night by providing free exercise drinking bottles to the gathering of members, and we all settled back to listen and learn.

Samantha Cleary (a foot technologist) presented to us on a wide range of issues covering all types of walking shoes, and the technology which goes into producing a staggering range of options.

First we examined the amazing range of materials that have been developed to support our precious plodders over the years, and Samantha explained how our individual walking style would denote the best 'solution' for our feet.

The sports shoe industry has become very high tech. over the years, and the amount of design planning that now goes into developing walking shoes many of us found to be quite staggering.

It was amazing too, how little things can affect comfort and support. Even the seemingly simple method of lacing up a boot can make a lot of difference in comfort and support we were told. There were lots of little hints to pick up throughout the night.

The key message to all of us was to take more time to seek out expert advice when choosing walking boots.....exactly Allan Donnelly's message to us last year.

Thanks to Samantha and the team from The Athletes Foot for providing such an informative night on very short notice.





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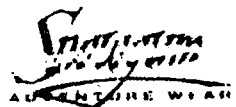
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Early Days of the Royal National Park

by *Errol Sheedy*

Sir John Robertson, acting head of government in NSW conceived the original idea for the reserve and on 26 April 1879 the National Park was dedicated by the Lieutenant Governor. Following the 1954 visit of Queen Elizabeth II it became known as the Royal National Park. From 1879 until the NPWS took over the Park was controlled by a Board of Trustees.

In 1893 the Trustees published *An Official Guide to The National Park*, the text being written by Thomas Ewell. This guide contains details which may not be readily available, and may be of interest to bushwalkers.

Ewell wrote, describing the original plans for the Park (which differed from current notions), "This immense people's reserve has high and dry patches of soil superior in quality, suitable for military manoeuvres, recreational and camping grounds, or for plantations of ornamental trees and shrubs...the air of these uplands is pure and invigorating to the jaded citizens of Sydney or her suburbs...in the not far distant future ... the National Park will stand a beautiful reserve, possessing undisturbed the best of its natural grandeur in the midst of a dense population".

Audley was named in honour of licensed surveyor Lord Audley who as far back as 1864 made the first accurate survey of The Hacking River.

"Another important work accomplished was the clearing, stumping, ploughing and grassing of Loftus Heights, from 1881, long before the Illawarra railway was built.

Between Loftus Railway Station (the former Royal NP Station) and the Park boundary at Sutherland was a broad piece of ground pierced with well made roads, and used with conspicuous success on several occasions for the military manoeuvres associated with the Easter Encampment of various branches of our defence force".

These military encampments resulted in several masonry dams being built for a water supply. One of these, which I have seen, is on upper Temptation Creek and another mentioned in the Guide was, I believe, on Platypus Gully. "A road was cut along

this gully to Kangaroo creek which is freely used as a bathing place by members of the defence force while under canvas."

(Let us express the hope, gentle reader, that this eccentric habit did keep the ultraviolet rays off, and did not cause any accidental drowning; at the same time we pray most fervently that, in this secluded and pristine waterway, the moral purity of the defenders of our fledgling nation was not sullied by the pernicious practice of skinny-dipping!)

"Several miles below Audley 160 acres ... opposite Gympsea Bay has been cleared and fenced for a deer park, where there are roaming at leisure fallow and red deer. Several fallow deer were initially installed, and in 1886 Mr E S Cox of Fernhill gave the Park five red deer."

"Thousands of ornamental and shade trees have been planted in avenues; many acres have been under-scrubbed and thoroughly cleared; and the useless under-scrub has given place to nutritious and ornamental grasses."

"In 1883 stone training walls were erected in the bend of the Hacking River below the dam, along and partly across the worst sand-shoal flats in the tidal river, and there action upon the stream has deepened the stretch of the main channel extending to Swallow Rock [at Gray's Point]. Two other loose stone walls keep the main channel open, sufficiently deep for steam launch navigation."

"At Audley proof of progress is visible in the clearing of five acres for a horse paddock; two acres for a fruit and vegetable garden. An island in the river is for the breeding of cygnets, a process at present attended by disaster owing to the presence of eels."

Some place names were different in 1893. What is now Bundeena was called Yarmouth, the name coming from the Yarmouth Estate, between Jibbon Beach and Jibbon Trig to the south. Loftus was then called Loftus Junction; the name for the former R N Park Railway Station was Loftus. Engadine did not exist on the map.

At that time the National Park included most of the land between the railway line and Woronora River - the present centre of Engadine being the southern, and Sutherland station the northern extremities of this north western portion of the Park.

▷ P10

◁ from P9 **the RNP**

But while the National Park, then, was bigger in the northern part, it was smaller in the south, for the southern most part was the Garie Beach region. The Southern boundary consisted of fencing, from the Princes Highway, along Gomera Ridge (between Waterfall Creek and Frews Creek), to the Hacking River, then a south stretch of the Hacking to Cawley's Creek, then another fence heading east to the coast near Garie Beach. I presume that the remains of a post and wire-strand fence which I have encountered while leading Club walks along Gomera Ridge is what is left of the old park boundary fence shown on the map in the 1893 guide. I also presume that the need for such extensive fencing on Gomera Ridge as well as along the Sutherland boundary was to prevent livestock straying into the wilds of the National Park. Ewell doesn't specify the reason for the fencing but makes the point of saying that initially, "Fencing alone an enormous and necessary undertaking, was proceeded with as expeditiously as available funds would permit."

The Guide doesn't predict the changes to the Park boundaries, but one cannot but wonder whether the authorities did some kind of land swap: the NW section towards the Woronora River being taken for suburban development in return for the addition of land south of the Garie region.

With percipient foresight the 1893 map lists the whole of the Kurnell peninsular as a "Proposed Site for Noxious Trades".

Along the eastern side of Lady Carrington Drive there are fifteen brooks that flow into the Hacking River, most of their names being on the present tourist map. "With an appropriateness beyond question the trustees have given to these gully streamlets the aboriginal names of Australian birds." The first creek south of Audley being called Mullion (eagle) Brook, and the southern most Palona (hawk) Brook. The small brook between Karoga (White Crane) Brook and Buralga (Native Companion) Brook is not named on the present map but the Trustees called it Gorra Worra (Laughing Jackass) Brook.

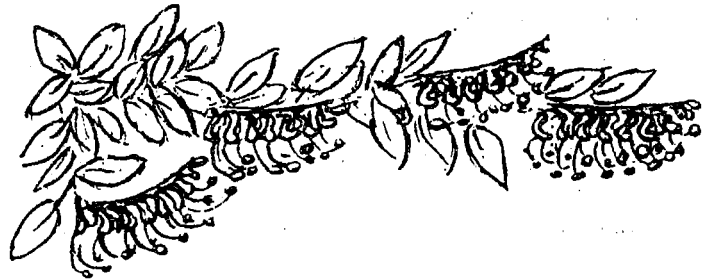
The Old Illawarra Road from Hurstville crossed the Georges River (at "Old Ferry") about 5km upstream from Como, before heading south to cross the Woronora River, before heading uphill to cross, and then follow the path of the present railway line. "In the early coaching days this old road was the only

overland means of communication with the Illawarra district".

Ewell advises that, proceeding from Audley to Kangaroo Creek, "Bathers should proceed around the second bend to a delightfully sequestered and suitable reach for matutinal ablutions or natatorial exercise".

"Along Lady Carrington Road ... two stone basins are set into the hillside ... with clear and cold spring water. Each basin bears the inscription 'Jersey Springs, 1892' in honour of his excellency the Earl of Jersey, the Governor of N.S.W."

Further along on the western side of the Hacking is an area "best known to the employees and officials of the Park as Walker's Garden, so called after one of the trustees, Mr Critchet Walker CMG: it is the most beautiful spot in the Park."



Bushwalkers who have enjoyed the delights of following Nerham Spur from the Hacking River up to the Uloola Track might find interesting the comment re the upper part of the Hacking where, "the native raspberry flourishes. It's botanical appellation is *Rubus rosaefolius* - the Neram of the aboriginals."

A visit to Garie Beach, "a most enjoyable day's outing at a secluded and lovely spot ... can be secured by parties who will communicate with the coach proprietor at Loftus Junction, or the Park authorities and order vehicles and horses to meet at Waterfall the morning train from Sydney".

"Wattamolla was the scene some years ago [before 1893] of trial boring operations for coal."

Curracurrang, a tiny cove just south of Wattamolla, "is best known locally as Snug Comer." In this cove there were, for many years, several boatsheds complete with steel rails for slipping fishing boats. □

Are There Defences Against Leeches?

Peter Miller

Down along the Clyde River in the Budawangs on Maurice Smiths gourmet walk they were everywhere, waving their nasty little heads in the direction of their next meal - us./ "They" of course were the leeches. It was raining when we pulled into Yadborough Flat camping area and the leeches were already there

▷ P11

◁ from P10

waiting for us; hungry, agile, resourceful and numerous.

As we walked through the wet undergrowth by the river we were attacked from all sides and had to develop strategies to repel our repulsive, unwanted boarders. Having plenty of time to think about the problem as we trudged along in the rain and observing the varying degrees in which we were attacked I offer the following suggestions as a means of minimising the number of bights you are likely to get.

1. Wear white joggers or sandshoes to make it easier to see them getting their first lift off the ground on their way to your succulent ankles.

2. Wear long, close woven nylon socks instead of woollen socks as they seem to have difficulty penetrating the nylon. Panty hose can be worn for the same reason but they tend to tear and wear out.

3. Carry a can of pump action insect repellent such as Rid or Aerogard and spray your footwear, socks and legs before starting out. (Crossing rivers and creeks and rain washes the repellent off and it is necessary to reapply it.) The pump action repellent is best as it can also be sprayed onto those leeches which still manage to get a hold and causes them to quickly drop off. Pump action repellents also save you from having the evil tasting chemicals on your hands at meal times.

4. Do not wear gaiters as the leeches get inside where they cannot be seen and happily fill themselves at their mobile blood bank - you.

5. Keep an eye on each others feet and legs and warn when leeches get through defences.

6. Sleep in a tent with a sewn floor to repel invaders (no, they don't sleep at night). If you are sleeping under a fly apply repellent to your face and neck before going to sleep.

7. Strong soap, Tea tree oil, perfume or deodorant will act as a deterrent if you do not have insect repellent but remember to reapply it as it is washed off.

I hope these observations will help you be better prepared when you are next going into known leech country.

(Of course, the only totally reliable defence is to stay home and mow the lawn but that is not a course of action to be recommended.) □

Change of date

My Berowra, Mount Ku-Ring Gai, Berowra day walk on Saturday, May 4 has been postponed until the following weekend, Sunday, May 11.

Peter Miller

Weeding at Coolana

Eradicating (or 'controlling') the weeds at Coolana seemed a rather daunting prospect when I first saw it and I'll admit that I thought it was quite impossible. Now, only a month or so later, the progress that's been made is amazing and now I'm convinced that the weeds can be licked (no - we'll poison the nettles and scotch thistles).

There are a great number of volunteer bush care groups in NSW and they all seem to be doing a very worthwhile job. Ed

The following, submitted by Alex Colley, is an extract from a recent issue of "Hut News" the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Newsletter.

It can be done!

When you first stand in a weed infested gully and look around you, and look at the small amount of work you have achieved that day, it seems hopeless. To clear all the weeds from this area will take forever, and with just a few people working only one morning a month it's impossible!

Popes Glen looked like one of those jobs less than four years ago. There were pine trees, laurels, cotoneasters, and holly, and masses of honeysuckle and ivy covered the ground and climbed over scrubs and up trees, thriving in a thick mulch of pine needles.

▷ P12

◀ from P11 weed control

The Popes Glen Bush care Group works on the last Saturday morning of each month from 9 to 1. At the end of every month heaps of ivy and honeysuckle, and enormous stacks of holly and laurel and cotoneaster have been collected from the road above by the council, small pine trees browned off and died.

One week day a number of large pine trees were cut down by contractors and their wood stacked beside the road.

What a transformation! Tall eucalypts and other native trees are recovering their strength after the long struggle to survive under the weight of the parasitic ivy. Freed from the creeping weeds, luscious tree ferns spread their fronds, and on the seemingly bare ground, ferns and tiny seedlings had been waiting for the chance to start growing. Gahniae have been planted beside the creek, and eucalypt saplings. Weed mats have been put down on the steep bank near the road and wattle planted. Steps have been built down the bank and a track marked to the creek and eventually there will be a walking track along the creek to join up with the present Popes Glen Track so people won't have to walk along the road.

Today you can stand in the gully and look around you and see the patches of good reclaimed bushland steadily increasing. In years down the track no-one will remember the weeds and people will walk through a pretty gully of tall eucalypts with understorey of tree ferns and other native shade and moisture loving plants.

What a wonderful result a small group of volunteers can achieve! □

The February 1996 General Meeting.

Barry Wallace

Around 2013, with the assembled multitude numbering some 22 or so, it all got too much for the president so she called the meeting to order. The call for apologies brought these forth for Jim Calloway, Tony Holgate and Jan Roberts.

There were no new members for welcome so we went on to the minutes of the previous meeting. These were read and received with no matters arising.

Correspondence was comprised, strangely enough, of various letters. There was one from Confederation regarding a proposal to set up a Blue Mountains Crossing walking route. It seems

Scripture Union Bushwalkers have an idea under consideration for a marked route across the mountains. Sounds vaguely familiar for some reason. We can only hope their deliberations are guided such that they follow the pattern of those before them and work out why it's not such a good idea before too much damage is done. Confederation is seeking a communications officer, human that is. We received a copy of the minutes of the Confederation's January general meeting. There was no outgoing correspondence.

The treasurer reported in absentia that we received income of \$1,102 and spent \$1,098.

Not only were the statistics absent from the walks report, there was a sort of apology, though whether this was for the presence in the past or absence on this occasion was unclear. The final conclusion seemed to be that the statistics are in suspense. So, if you think they were the greatest thing since sliced bread, or are unmoved by being told how many Sydharbs of drinking water your backyard pool consumes every millennia, tell Eddie. It's unlikely you'll make any difference, but it *is* good to have the people feel they have a role to play in the democratic process.

The walks reports began at the weekend of January 13, 14 with Peter Miller leading a party of 5 on a hot, cicada saturated walk on Marramarra Creek. The walk was pleasant and relaxed but the presence of trail bikes and a utility on the tracks beyond the access barrier detracted from the pleasure somewhat. Odd how quickly and unbidden the phrase "beer swilling overweight yobbos with mobile phones" sprang to mind on first sight. One should not so quickly rush to judgment, but they *were* each clutching a stubby, except for the one who had chosen to decorate a nearby tree with his empty, the *were* overweight, overbelt in fact, and *one* of them had a mobile phone at waist, round the back where it wouldn't be uncomfortable. There went the neighbourhood.

The weekend of 19, 20, 21 January saw Kenn Clacher with a group of 4 in Yarramun Creek. Water conditions were such that they walked most of the way. On the Saturday Rosemary MacDougal's ▶ walk down to the Grose went but there were no other details. Tom Wenman led 7 on his Colo River trip ▶ the same day. Conditions were hot but the party managed to cope by floating in the river most of the time. Bill Holland's combined walk, swim, lunch, walk, barbecue trip attracted 11 brave souls. ▶

◁ Laurie Bore led 13 on his Sunday trip from Avalon to DeeWhy in overcast conditions and Jim Callaway had 6 on his trip from Bundeena to Otford. It is alleged there exists a written report for this last trip, but no other evidence is to hand.

The Australia day weekend saw Spiro leading a party of 14 on his trip into the Blue Breaks in glorious weather. This latter no doubt had something to do with the numerous snakes encountered along the way. Jim Rivers (hi Jim) had a party of 13 along on this "had to be done again" version of his trip out from Little Forest Plateau. The weather was good, the views were excellent, there were no problems, and everyone was happy; and we wouldn't say this if Jim wasn't sending us detailed faxes. Tony Holgate on the other hand presented a verbal report for his weekend trip down Morong Deep. The party of 5 had a good time and Jan's scratches have almost healed. I'm not sure we wished to know that! On the Saturday Nancye Alderson and a cast of 25 took a historical walk from Linden to Woodford and on Sunday Steven Ellis's trip to Bluegum went, but we have no other details.

John Hogan led his Lake Macquarie water sports trip over the weekend of 3, 4 February with a party of 4. The campsite was superb, the water was warm and the party had a good weekend. Greg Bridge's walk out from Badgerys Lookout on the Saturday went, with no other details. Elwyn Morris led one of the two Sunday walks, going from Newport to Palm Beach via lunch at Avalon, afternoon tea at Whale Beach, the rocks, a few back streets and at least one concrete driveway. Conditions were sunny, with the coastal breeze holding temperatures in the comfort zone. There was no report for Wilf's stage five of the circumnavigation of Port Jackson. We place no reliance on the rumour that they are all under arrest for trespass.

Geoff McIntosh and his abseiling consultant Kenn Clacher had parties of 8 and 7 on the Saturday and Sunday of their abseiling and canyoning in the vicinity of Hat Hill Creek trip over the weekend of 10, 11 February. Zol Bodlay's Saturday Duckponds walk went, but there were no other details. Allan Donnelley had a party of 5 on his Bell Creek Canyon trip the same day. Conditions were cool with some drizzle, but the spectacular creek took their minds off the discomfort, almost. Eddie Giacomel led 24 on his Mountain Lagoon walk, also on the Saturday, in cool conditions, with the rain holding off until a heavy downpour as they approached the cars. Greta reported that her Faulconbridge to Glenbrook Sunday

walk went smoothly with leeches to entertain the 11 walkers along the way. There was no report for Errol Sheedy's Waterfall to Heathcote walk but Geoff Dowsett had a party of 12, also entertained by leeches, on his Barren Grounds walk. The party came across one huge speckled leech which they later insisted was a diamond python. They also reported an interesting ascent along the way. One is left wondering whether they were there at all, or just overinvolved in an old board game. Well, it's one way to end the walks report.

The conservation report brought news of a press release from NPWS detailing the closure of the abseiling route(sic.) on the face of Mount Banks. It appears someone, probably a commercial guide organisation, had installed about 50 rock bolts and several chains and cleared hundreds of metres of track. Traffic on the route had caused further damage to vegetation and set off erosion of the surface cover. There was also advice from Kosciusko National Park on action taken to apprehend people illegally hunting pigs with dogs in that park.

The minister for urban affairs and planning has responded to our letter regarding the impact of changes in the Sydney Water Corporation regulations by advising that it is not expected that they will reduce access to walking areas in the National Parks. Andy McQueen has written requesting permission to use a cartoon and photograph previously published in the 1977 annual SBW magazine. He is also seeking the identity of whoever took the photo, of a mixed party walking the Grose. Any clues out there?

Confederation report indicated that Rocky Creek Canyon is to be added to the Wollemi National Park. Risk taking in National Parks is technically prohibited. Correspondence has been entered into. Meeting arrangements for confederation are under review. Sydney Bushwalkers will oppose the move to hold general meeting only every quarter instead of every month.

General business saw passage of a motion that the club write to Pittwater Council regarding problems with access to Whale Beach from nearby walking tracks.

We are advised of the death of Ken Gould who joined the club in 1979 and was a member until illness led to his resignation last year.

The meeting closed at about 2134 □

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

WILDERNESS VISIONS

Maurice Smith

I refer to Barry Wallace's report of the December 1995 General Meeting in our club's January 1996 newsletter (page 8) and also to Alex Colley's Conservation Secretary's report in the club's 68th annual report (page 7).

Regrettably I was unable to attend the December general meeting. The members present voted to reject The Confederation of Bushwalking Club's (then) proposed nomination to NPWS of the Grose Valley as a wilderness within the meaning of the NSW Wilderness Act.

My reason for writing is that I strongly believe that the club's members who so voted at that meeting, have let down the club. Strong words indeed! Yet I deliberately chose to use the word "let down" because I believe that is what occurred at the meeting.

The rejection of the opportunity by the members present to further demonstrate the strong conservation traditions of the club does not sit well with me.

Grose Wilderness nomination

The Grose Wilderness nomination was lodged with NPWS in late January 1996. It required many months of effort to gather the necessary data, do the field research and to write the proposal. It cannot be said to be a quick casual effort. This proposal was a serious undertaking by dedicated people who are committed to the preservation of some of our favourite walking areas.

The Grose Wilderness area nominated for wilderness assessment covers about 55,000 hectares, 95% of which is presently in the Blue Mountains National Park. The eastern most edge of the nominated area is only 55 kilometres from the Sydney GPO!

The "tourist" sections of the Grose Valley, for example, the Grand Canyon, the Perry's Lookdown track and Acacia Flats camping area, have been excluded from the nomination. This was because those sections are not capable of meeting the wilderness definition referred to below. The tourist sections have tracks, pit toilets, signs, helicopter landing pads, and so on. Such facilities are needed for very heavy traffic areas. However, their presence precludes those areas from inclusion in the area nominated for assessment as wilderness. I have no problem with the exclusion of the superb tourist sections from the proposed wilderness boundaries. The magnificent Blue Gum

Forest, of such renown, is included in the nominated area.

What is a Wilderness?

Section 6 of the NSW Wilderness Act requires that "an area of land shall not be identified as wilderness unless (a) the area is, together with its plant and animal communities, in a state that has not been substantially modified by humans and their works or is capable of being restored to such a state; (b) the area is of sufficient size to make its maintenance in such a state feasible; and (c) the area is capable of providing opportunities for solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation."

Consequences of being declared as a Wilderness

Following the lodgement of the nomination the NPWS now has two years in which to assess and decide whether the nominated area does meet the Wilderness Act's definition of wilderness. Assume, for the moment, that the nominated area is accepted as a "wilderness", what are the consequences? The major consequence is that the wilderness area will receive a higher level of protection than that now applying. This is particularly important because significant parts of the area are close to the present tourist attractions of the Blue Mountains. For example, the opportunities for commercial uses of the area will be significantly diminished. Any proposed developments that might effect the nominated area will be assessed to take into account their effects on the wilderness area. This is, without much debate, in the interests of all current and future generations of bushwalkers.

Our club's conservation heritage

Sydney Bush Walkers have much to be proud of in its nearly 70 years of history in many difficult Conservation activities. For example, SBW members in the 1930's played an absolutely crucial and pivotal role in saving the Blue Gum Forest that is included in the nominated area.

What immense strategic vision and courage those members showed in the days when the conservation movement, that we now take for granted, hardly existed. The strategic vision demonstrated by our early members is praised by any bushwalker or tourist who enjoys the splendour of the Blue Gum Forest. In the depths of the 1930's Great Depression those far-sighted members took on a great financial burden to save the Blue Gum Forest. Their collective courage is something that we can only admire and be grateful for today.

Bushwalkers more recently demonstrated the strategic vision, intellectual rigour and political >

< courage necessary for the development and passing of the NSW Wilderness Act and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Act.

The letter of rejection

Sydney Bush Walkers wrote a letter to Confederation, wherein the club rejected the proposal because the *"area is so degraded that we fear the nomination will devalue the concept of wilderness and the proposed road closures will have serious political ramifications"*. [1] Allow me to consider these two reasons cited to justify the rejection of the proposal.

Degraded Area

As indicated earlier in this letter, for the nominated area to be declared a wilderness it must meet the definition of wilderness.

If an area is degraded that does not prevent it's inclusion in the nomination as a wilderness provided that the area is capable of restoration (refer to the definition of "wilderness" quoted above). It is a sad fact that some of our NSW wilderness contain areas that are degraded.

To reject the entire proposal because of some vague notion of "degraded" areas is akin to throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

It seems that we have taken an "all or nothing" approach where we should allow NPWS to undertake the assessment process.

Serious political ramifications

Similarly, to reject the proposal because of "serious political ramifications" is, in my view, absolute bunkum. Serious political fights go on all the time to protect our environment and our traditional bushwalking areas. Two very recent (successful) examples of political fights are worthy of recounting. The Kowmung Committee was instrumental in the Carr Government abandoning the Fahey Government's proposal to lift the height of the Warragamba Dam wall that would have flooded important wild and scenic rivers, including the Kowmung River. This was a worthy fight! Only last year Confederation fought Sydney Water and won the right to maintain bush walker access to the southern Blue Mountains. This was a worthy fight!

To shy away from another political fight to protect a wilderness area is lacking the political courage so capably demonstrated by our early club members.

What was the real reason for rejection?

Why did the club reject the proposed wilderness nomination? Was it because of the several roads / fire trails traditionally used by bush walkers for access to the Grose Valley might be blocked off to vehicles?

As part of the wilderness assessment process NPWS will examine current uses of access roads. If the NPWS assessment is favourable, they then determine whether the access roads proposed be closed in the Wilderness need to be closed to bushwalkers (and tourists). Not to propose the closures would open a justifiable criticism we want everything and are not prepared to give anything in return.

The real message that is received

Sydney Bush Walkers is the oldest bush walking club in NSW and is one of the oldest bushwalking clubs in Australia. SBW should, by supporting this proposal, continue to do everything possible to ensure that the superb bushwalking areas so close to Sydney are protected and enhanced in status. In rejecting this proposal, I believe that the message that Sydney Bush Walkers sends is that it now lacks the strategic vision, and political courage of its early members in doing so and has not done its members proud.

The potential gain to current and future generations of bushwalkers that will result from a successful nomination of the area is, I believe, a classic demonstration of the values exhibited by our early members. I believe that our decision to reject the proposal should be deplored by club members.

The people who want to exploit our national parks for commercial advantage have not grown complacent. They're still vigorous and politically active. We must continue to do everything we can to protect our remaining (diminishing) natural environment.

Where is the strategic vision now? Where is the intellectual rigour now? Where is the political courage now? Our early club members showed us how!

Let us rethink this rejected proposal. It isn't too late to demonstrate our strategic vision; intellectual rigour, political courage and conservation heritage by endorsing Confederation's Grose Wilderness Nomination.

Good walking,

Maurice Smith

[1] Sydney Bush Walkers letter of 16 November 1995, to John Macris Conservation Officer of Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs, quoted with permission from Spiro Hajinakitas, Secretary of Sydney Bush Walker

The Cross Cut Saw.

Pat Harrison

(Reprinted from May 1969 Sydney Bushwalker.)

"And is this-Yarrow?-THIS the stream
Of which my fancy cherished,
So faithfully, a waking dream?"

The poet Wordsworth wrote these lines after he had first seen Yarrow in Scotland; but there had been other times when he had failed to get to that beautiful place, and on one of these occasions he wrote the following lines:-

"If care with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly,-
Should we be loath to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy;
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow."

The Cross cut Saw is one of a couple of places that have stood in the same relation to me. Once upon a time I invited a chap to go there on a walking tour but he mucked the proposal up before it got started and I abandoned it. However, the Sydney Bushwalkers are a different proposition and can be relied on to stick fast to a plan; consequently seven of us (Ray Hookway, Frank Taeker, Roger Gowing, Bill Gillam, Ross Hughes, Jim Vatiliotis and myself) made our first landfall at the Paragon cafe at Goulburn at 10pm on Easter Thursday and our next one at Holbrook at 3.20am on Good Friday! The petrol stations were still open and doing a roaring trade.

After a couple of hours in our bags we drove as far as Table Top near Albury where we pulled off the road and boiled the billies for breakfast. The morning

was clear and sunny, everyone was in good spirits, and other car loads of bushwalkers tooted us as they headed north. There was also a gorging of fruit and tomatoes - far better for these things to be inside your tummy than inside the Fruit Inspector's hut across the border.

The next landfalls were to be Benalla and Mirimbah, but because of a combination of events we did not see Bill's Toyota at either of these places although we waited at both of them. Ray's car had been in front but had pulled in for petrol while Bill was stuck behind a semi-trailer and consequently Bill thought that we were still ahead of him.

We spent two hours in the sun at Mirimbah, having lunch and waiting for Bill, and then learnt from some campers that a white Toyota station waggon with a NSW plate had been there hours ago and had asked directions to "The Springs". This of course was McAlister Springs where we were all going, so we threw our gear into the car and set off for the Howqua river which would be as far as we could drive; but no Toyota had been on the Howqua, either at Bindaree Hut or elsewhere, so we parked Ray's car at the foot of the Howitt spur after leaving messages for a white Toyota with campers scattered along the river.

We had driven about 525 miles since we left Sydney, all of it on very good roads. The 25 miles from Mirimbah to the Howqua were dirt and were up and over a mountain range, but it is as good a road as you would wish for, being wider and with far better grades (for example) than the road in and out of Jenolan Caves. There are Bushfire dugouts at the Howqua Gap (or Woolly Butt saddle as it is called on the map), which is on the Divide between the Delatite and Howqua river, and there are also dugouts 19 miles from Mirimbah at a place where the road changes direction to descend to the Howqua. As we drove along from Howqua Gap to the 19 mile dugouts we got tantalising glimpses of the tilted sandstone escarpment of the Bluff Divide across the Howqua valley and these glimpses whetted our appetites no end for tomorrow's walk. The aspect of these mountains is completely different from any of ours such as the Snowy Mountains, the Brindabellas, the Budawangs, the Blue Mountains, etc. They really looked good. Another splendid sight was of Mt Buller as we drove along the

◁ road between Mansfield and Mirimbah. We set up camp at the foot of the Howitt Spur and we were finishing off our meal with a pot of tea when a lone walker, Barry Woods, drove up and camped with us and helped to yam the hours away. Barry gave us good information about our proposed route and he also gave us spare maps which we concealed under Ray's car for Bill's use. (I was sure that Bill would turn up eventually, although some opinions were that he had either gone skiing or trout fishing). You can imagine how soundly we slept that night. The four of us slept side by side. You all know how Roger Gowing snores yet no one heard anything all night. Best sleep I ever had.

On the morrow we left maps and a note with detailed descriptions of our route, then we set off with Barry up Howitt Spur on a very good track from which gradually unfolded wonderful views of Mt Magdala and its Hell's Window (formed by a cleft at the edge of the mountain) on one side while the other gave us our first glimpse of the magical land of the Crosscut Saw, a jagged and spectacular series of bare alpine peaks about 5 miles long which connects Mt Speculation with the Mt Howitt plateau. The Crosscut saw is part of the Great Dividing Range and it is a razor back ridge, parts of it being only 4 or 5 feet wide. Somewhere near where the Alpine Ash gave way to the Snow Gums we said goodbye to Barry who was off on a solo trip around the Crosscut Saw - The Viking - The Devil's Staircase and back over Howitt to the Howqua.

A few hundred feet below the summit the Snow Gums ceased and the track zig-zagged up the rocks past odd bushes of flowering Boronia and finally emerged on the grassy plateau which is Mt Howitt (5,715 feet). Mt Howitt is named after Alfred William Howitt (1830-1908) who was an explorer (he searched for and found the sole survivor of the Burke and Wills expedition), scientist, geologist, botanist, and an expert on the Australian Aborigines.

The view from the trig was panoramic - Buller, Stirling, Speculation, Cobbler, Buffalo, The Razor, The Viking, Wonnangatta Valley, Snowy Plains, Clear, and back to the Bluff but the most impressive sight of all was the Crosscut Saw lying at our feet and presenting a series of ups and downs each of a few hundred feet, over which as we watched we could see a party of walkers threading their way.

We followed the cairns and snow poles across the flowery top of Howitt through masses of golden Everlastings splashed with purple daisies, to the edge of the plateau overlooking the Terrible Hollow. On the far side of the hollow The Razor and The Viking stood up in the tilted pose characteristic of the area.

While Frank was busy with his camera the rest of us lolled about having an early lunch and finally at 11am set out for the traverse of the Crosscut Saw as far as Mount Buggery.

Having been consigned to this well known locality on numerous occasions I was keen to see it. We arrived there about 90 minutes later to find it occupied by members of the Melbourne Women's Walking Club, some of whom who remembered Dot English (Butler) and asked if she still walked in bare feet?

On the way out near the turn-off to Stanley's Name Spur we also met four boys from Timber Top and by a coincidence one of them was from my small home town in North Western NSW. Small world indeed.

On the way back along the narrow crest there was a most effective scene with The Terrible Hollow in bright sunshine while the Howqua side was gloomy with cloud looming up from Buller. For half an hour it seemed as if it would snow but it quickly passed away and bright sunshine returned.

It was about 3.30pm when we got back to Howitt, and whom do you think we saw emerging from that horrible-looking gully between Howitt and the Crosscut? Correct! It was Bill, Ross, and Jim who had blithely ignored our note, our directions, our maps, and had pioneered a new route up to Howitt, a route which we appropriately called The Retribution Route. However, after we had looked down into that gully we reckoned that the penance they had performed had cleared away all of their sins.

Ross was still shaking from an encounter with a snake met on a narrow ledge at face height.

Anyway we were all together in a good campsite at McAlister Springs, which is about 1½ miles east of Howitt and connected to it by a narrow saddle. A spring gushes out of the mountainside here and forms the beginning of the McAlister River. The water must be boiled because of the chance of becoming infected with parasitic worms which ▷

◁ FROM P15 the cross cut saw

emanate from the cattle which are brought up to the high plains in summer. To a New South Welshman, used to pure water and unchurned stream banks in our National Parks, the water supply here is not pristine and this condition is directly attributable to cattle grazing which should be stopped at once and the whole magnificent area from here to Kosciusko converted to a National Park forthwith.

Sunday's walk was a leisurely and scenic stroll back over Howitt, Magdala, Lovick, and on to the hut at the foot of The Bluff. We never saw much of Frank of course as he was performing prodigies of patience in photographing insects and flowers.

From Magdala we dropped down about 800 feet on a narrow ridge and up about 600 feet to the jeep track near No.1 Divide, where we left the Great Dividing Range and walked south-westward to a good hut under Mt Lovick where we used the tank water to make fizz. A nearby dam was filled with a murky liquid.

A steep climb over Mt Lovick and we were at The Bluff Hut at 4pm (another good one with bunks and a tank and another murky dam).

On the last morning we set out packless for The Bluff at 7.30am, that is all except Frank who was dawdling along in his own inimitable way, compiling a pictorial record of odd botanical and zoological specimens. At the Bluff we had completed a most magnificent ridge walk since reaching Howitt, even better than The Razorback between Feathertop and Hotham, but from the Bluff we could see other interesting routes such as the one along the Great Divide from No.1 Divide over Mt Clear, The Nobs and Mt McDonald, the last looking most enticing with its barish slopes and its three peaks somewhat reminiscent of Mt Cloudmaker in the Gangerangs. Further away to the east across the Mcalister River the skyline was dominated by Mt Reynard athwart the Snowy Plains.

Most of the rock in the area we traversed is sandstone with a decided tilt, said to have been caused by the movement of the granite mass of Mt Buffalo.

Back to Bluff Hut by 10am to spend an hour lying in the sun before Frank sauntered back, then off to the jeep track down the 16 mile spur which for steepness

would be hard to beat. Lace your footwear up tightly coming down here otherwise you will wear the ends off your toes as a couple of our party did. The track goes down for a couple of thousand feet without any levelling. It is almost as steep as the Gasper Buttress on Mt Jenolan, with a road thrown in for good measure. There were half a dozen cows ahead of us for some of the way and everyone was amazed at the strength of the cows' legs in relation to their small size and the great weight they carry. Bushwalkers, of course, could always get relief by turning around and walking down backwards part of the way.

The 16 mile creek near its junction with the Howqua runs over smooth granite bars and you should have seen the fisherman's gleam in Bill's eyes as he viewed the pools above the little cascades. After lunch at Pike's Flat we followed the brawling, turbulent, white-water Howqua up to Bindaree Hut arriving there at 2.35pm.

It was a beautiful afternoon at Bindaree, just as all of the other days had been, and four of us set out at once without packs on the 3½ mile bash to bring the cars back from the foot of the Howitt Spur. Back at Bindaree for a wash in the icy Howqua then Bill's Toyota set out for home and we followed soon after. Bill's car blew a head gasket near Holbrook and he finally got home at 7pm next day.

Our car group only intended to get out of the Howqua this night and we therefore camped on the Delatite at Mirimbah where the trees were undergoing a most glorious colour change.

After sleeping like a top all other nights I lay awake all this night because of the noisy river and the whine of the timber jinkers which were apparently making the most of the good weather. You haven't seen or heard anything unless you have seen and heard a timber jinker speeding along at 60mph with two huge ash logs chained on the back.

We had a scenic drive home via Mansfield, Power's Lookout, Whitfield, Dandongadale, Buffalo River, Myrtleford (full of nostalgia for Roger whose mother was born in the Vicarage there), and Beechworth and were home by midnight. □