



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 1998

In This Issue, No. 760:

P 2 Walking Abandoned Railways
by Jim Longworth.

P 4 The Wild Dogs Lament *by Harry Hill.*

P 6 Committee 1998

Investiture of the New President

Subscriptions for 1998/99

P7 Cars vs Public Transport *by George Carter
and Elwyn Morris.*

Kakadu *by Carole Beales.*

P8 Viva La Difference Part 2 *by Peter Rossel.*

P11 Selling the Parks *by Alex Colley.*

P 13 General Meeting *by Barry Wallace*

P14 Ode to David Trinders 1997 Christmas Walk
by Karen Brading
Footnotes

Advertisers

P 5 Eastwood Camping Centre

P 10 Alpsports

P 12 Willis's Walkabouts

Back cover Paddy Pallin

WALKING ABANDONED RAILWAYS

By Jim Longworth

For some walkers "wilderness" offers the peak walking experience, however for others coming across remnants of long abandoned human activity, heightens the experience of walking through a landscape. For those who enjoy the synergistic effect of seeing a rustic relic gradually being appropriated back into the natural landscape, walking abandoned railway lines offers, history, easy walking, exercise, nature study, and the opportunity for creative historic fantasy.

In NSW railway lines have been built and later abandoned by both the NSW government for general carriage, and private companies for industrial purposes.

At its maximum extent the NSW government railways operated approximately 10,194 Kilometres of railway line routes. Of these 7,385 Kilometres remain operational, leaving 2,809 Kilometres that have been "abandoned" (as at June 1995). Some abandoned lines near the Victorian border were actually operated by the Victorian government railways though the lines were in NSW.

Abandoned government lines in NSW are to be found from the coast at Toronto to the western plains at Bourke, from Wallan-garra in the north to Bombala in the south, from the rain forests of the Dorrigo Plateaux to the desert at Tarrawingee, from the New England highlands at Glen Innes to western plains at Hay, from Mudgee in the central highlands to the centre of Sydney at Darling Harbour. While most were dead-end rural branch lines such as Uranquinty to Kywong, others such as Glen Innes to Wallan-garra were major cross country through lines. Most served wheat or sheep growing areas, while others served timber getting such as Glenreagh to Dorrigo, or mines such as Bungendore to Captains Flat.

The total kilometerage of private industrial railway lines is unknown, but runs into the many many hundreds.

Private industrial lines while usually shorter than government lines, may be found anywhere coal was hauled out of an old mine, ore containing precious metal was hauled to a crusher, coal was carried into a coal fired electricity generating power house or water pumping station, logs were hauled from the forest into an old sawmill, sugar cane was hauled from the fields into the crushing mill, rock was excavated from an old quarry, materials were hauled into a dam construction site, supplies were hauled up to an old lighthouse, metal was moved around within a steel works, ammunition was hauled to gun emplacements along the coast, or an old breakwater was constructed. Private industrial lines predated the opening of the NSW government railway system in 1855 by at least twenty-four years, when the Australian Agricultural Company constructed an inclined plane between their "A Pit" and a loading wharf on the banks of the Hunter River (c.1831).

For those with a penchant for history, walking abandoned railways offers the opportunity to inspect sites of historical association in the flesh. Distinctive architecture, relics of long gone modes of handling goods and people, industrial archaeology spreads out along the line before you.

Railway tracks cross the landscape in a series of sweeping curves, valleys were crossed by embankments, bridges, and trestles, hills were cut through by cutting or tunnel. All of these offer the walker potentially easy walking, though leasing by adjoining landowners, and demolition of some bridges means that detours will have to be made. Solid boots are recommended as hours of walking on ballast can leave the ankles sore, and sleepers are never a convenient stride apart. Fortunately most lines were accompanied by a vehicle access track/firebreak, which eases the effort.

As a specific Act of Parliament is required to "close" a particular railway line, very few lines have truly been abandoned in the legal

sense. Most so called "abandoned" lines have merely been mothballed, disused, or had their service suspended. The result is that a great deal of infrastructure (track, bridges, tunnels, stations, platforms, signal posts, signs, crossings, etc.) remains in place once the line no longer carries railway traffic.

An abandoned railway line is a dynamic environment. The land for most railway corridors was resumed at either one and a half or two Chains wide, usually widening to four Chains wide at stations. Railway corridors always have a high to extreme edge/area ratio. Even within the corridor the land is almost all edges. Ecotones occur between the corridor and adjoining land-uses on both sides, between the ballasted track areas and the right-of-way, between the access road/fire break and the adjoining land, between the drains and land surface, and along under power or telegraph lines. Cuttings and embankments further diversify the environments available to colonisation by adventitious plants.

Once the railway is abandoned, regular routine maintenance changes from works that are directed specifically at allowing trains to run, to works that are directed at only complying with statutory obligations. Regular weed control in the ballasted area ceases (apart from controlling noxious weeds), burning off is minimised, use of access tracks becomes infrequent, infrastructure falls into disrepair, drains clog, and fences fall down or are realigned to suit the desires of adjoining land owners. Changing the maintenance regime alters the environmental forces acting on the land, which in turn alters the ecological dynamics: vegetation, wildlife, and finally landscape.

Some species of plants that were held in check by routine maintenance will now grow prolifically, others that required the artificial railway environment in which to thrive, will succumb to the more aggressive species better suited to the new conditions. Some species are common agricultural weeds, others are garden escapes from what were

often prize winning gardens lovingly tended by the Station Master his pride and joy. The population of animals that are dependent on the vegetation, will in turn change in response to the altered floral characteristics.

At some stations the station buildings or goods shed remain. Many station buildings have been converted into tourist information centres, local history museums, craft galleries, residences, and farm storage sheds. There is potential to convert others into back-packer accommodation, should a member be so enterprising.

The sinuous tracks seductively beckon on, on to explore around the next bend, who knows what may lie beyond the ridge, or what is to be found at the next station. Go forth and explore, wander the landscape, study the changing patterns of nature as relics are reclaimed, and dream. Step back in awe as a mighty Garrett thunders over the high and lofty stone viaduct, or listen for the faint shrill whistle of the tiny narrow gauge loco rocking along its over-grown track as it hauls a rake of wood-bodied skips from mine to crushing plant.

The following lines are known to have well established walking tracks along their length:

North coast:

Booyong - Ballina (in parts)
Syndicate Ridge
Crawford River - Purgatory
Langley Vale - bush
Wooten - bush

Newcastle:

Adamstown - Belmont
Fassifern - Toronto
Hunter Valley - various closed coal mine lines

Blue Mountains:

Giant landslide - Ruined Castle
Lapstone Zig Zag
Hartley - summit of the incline
Mount Victoria - chert incline
Darvan deviation
Newnes Junction - Newnes

Sydney:

West Head incline
Thornleigh Zig Zag

Richmond - Kurrajong
 Rookwood Cemetery
 Como railway bridge
 St. James tunnels.

Illawarra:

Waterfall - Stanwell Park

Southern Tablelands and Slopes:

Bargo - Nepean Dam

Colo Vale - Hill Top

Welby - Box Vale

Swifts - Burrinjuck Dam

Those wishing to know more about walking abandoned railway lines, or assist in converting them into walking tracks, should contact either: Donald Ellsmore, SRA Heritage Manager, 11-31 York Street Sydney 2000, or Australian Rails to Trails, PO Box 223 East Melbourne 3002. Maps of disused lines are readily available. A couple of walking guides have already been published. For those wishing to learn more about the history of the abandoned lines that they are walking: the Australian Railway Historical Society, 67 Renwick Street Redfern 2016 (predominantly interested in the government lines), or the Light Railway Research Society of Australia, PO Box 21 Surrey Hills Victoria 3127 (specialising in the industrial lines), have published histories of many of these now abandoned railway lines.

Additional Walk Easter - 2 x Three Peaks Walk (4 days, medium hard) Maps:

Jenolan & Kanangra Carlons Farm, Breakfast Crk, Mt Warrigal, Splendour Rock, Cox's River, Kooriecone Ridge, Gentles Pass, Dex Crk, Mt Cloudmaker, Mt Stormbreaker, Kanangra Crk, Mt Paralyser, Whalanian Crk, Nooroo Buttress, Mt Guougang, Mt Queahgong, Mt Jenolan, Jenolan Gorge, Cox's River, Tinpot Ridge, Carlons Farm - light weight trip, 50% + off track, bring gloves - Tigers where are you? Ian Wolfe 02 9904 3370 (H), 02 9378 8885 (W), 02 9378 8870 (W fax)

The Wild Dog's Lament

by Harry Hill

Do I have a favorite? Yes, I do,
 It's warrigal, dingo, wild dog poo.
 I admit I admire that chap,
 There's such diversity in his crap.

I have seen what dogs can do,
 Doggy droppings, doogy poo.
 Some of it is glistening white,
 Like a beacon in the night.

Once upon the Grey mare track,
 A turd I saw, it took me back.
 A wild dog had defecated there,
 But where's the bones, the fur, the hair?

Upon Echidna he had dined,
 Anteater, porcupine, I don't mind.
 and that dog to get his fill,
 Had eaten every bloomin quill.

That dog turd it fairly bristled,
 In passing it he surely whistled.
 Each spine, each quill, it did protrude,
 Don't get me wrong, I'm not being rude.

That dog was cast-iron intestined,
 He'd passed them all non-aligned.
 Many an anus would be mangled,
 To pass them all right-angled.

I know that you've all been saying "struth,"
 So I'll finish with the truth.
 Perhaps you laughed at the dirty bits'
 But in the main you've had the shits.

So if one night at Pretty Plain,
 You hear a howl, it sounds like pain,
 You'll all know the reason now,
 It's a wild dog saying, "O-o-o-o wwwww!"

This poem by Harry Hill was published in the KHA newsletter Issue 76 of December 1991, and is re-published here with the authors consent.



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COMMITTEE 1998/99

The AGM was held on 11 March 1998 and the new committee elected. Although you may have missed out on a Committee position your input to the management of the Club is always welcome; there's usually more work to be done than there are workers. So don't be shy contact the appropriate Committee members and make your contribution known.

INVESTITURE OF THE NEW PRESIDENT

At the General Meeting, 8 April our new president, Eddy Giacomel, will be invested with the Symbols of Office. For new members in particular, and also for old members with a sense of tradition and history, this is a moving and heart-warming ceremony definitely not to be missed. Refreshments will be served and the meeting will be minimised to make this a night to remember.

SUBSCRIPTIONS for 1998/99

The subscriptions remain the same as for last year **AND ARE NOW DUE.**

single members	\$35
household membership	\$58
Non-active member	\$12
Non-active member + magazine	\$25
magazine subscription only	\$12

You may pay at the Clubrooms (cash or cheque) or by mail (cheque, bank cheque or money order), cheques etc. made out to Sydney Bushwalkers Inc. Payment by mail to the Treasurer,

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GPO Box 4476
Sydney 2001

Include with your payment by mail the following details:

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- name(s) of member(s) covered by this subscription,
- if changed, telephone numbers, mailing address + post code,

If you changed your family name during the year please tell us both names (old name & new name) to assist in identification of your membership record.

Committee 1998/99

Committee Positions

President	Eddy Giacomel
Vice-president	Tony Holgate
Secretary	Don Wills
Treasurer	Greta James
Public Officer	Frances Holland
Walks Secretary	Bill Capon
Social Secretary	Peter Dalton
Membership Secretary	Barry Wallace
New Members Secretary	Jennifer Giacomel
Conservation Secretary	Bill Holland
Magazine Editor	Patrick James
Confederation Delegates	Jim Callaway Ken Smith
Members Representatives	Elwyn Morris Louise Verdon

Non-Committee Positions

Confederation Delegates	Bill Holland Tom Wenman
Magazine Production Manager	Frances Holland
Magazine Business Manager	Elizabeth Miller
Printers	Kenn Clacher Barrie Murdoch Margaret Niven Les Powell Tom Wenman Tony Marshall
Assistants to Walks Secretary	Carol Faulkner
Assistants to New Members Secretary	Cindy Holland
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Kosciuszko Huts Association Representatives	Ian Wolfe
Search & Rescue Contacts	Bill Holland Greta James Morrie Ward
Coolana Maintenance	Don Brooks Frances Holland Patrick James Peter Rossel
Reunion Organiser	Spiro Hajinakitas
Training	Allen Donnelly, Bill Holland Patrick James

CARS vs PUBLIC TRANSPORT

by George Carter and Elwyn Morris

(having lost his car, Ray Hookway is lost for words, so Elwyn & George decide to have their two bobs worth and reply to Ray's article published last month)

As environmentalists, we wish public transport were cheaper and more freely available for seeing the countryside thoroughly in the UK, Ireland, France, the Spanish Pyrenees, America, Canada and Australia. But it isn't.

We need a car to:

1) save money by camping or staying in hostels, often in remote places with no public transport, rather than spend at least \$35 pp a night on B & B's or hotels in towns, plus restaurant meals. With a car, we carry car-camping equipment, table and chairs, stove and food to do our own cooking.

2) get to, see, walk and camp in the most spectacular scenery, sites and wilderness areas, anywhere. We still get to converse in campgrounds and hostels, and with volunteer guides in historic buildings.

3) see the National Trust houses, gardens, villages, coastlines and Heritage castles in the UK (all free for members) and the ruins and scenery of Ireland. Rather than making a snap decision to hop on a ferry to Dublin, where car hire rates are \$15 a day higher than in Belfast, it would have been cheaper for Ray to book ahead and pay for a car for three or four weeks from Belfast International Airport, already 30 km out in the countryside, £62 return from London. We get the smallest cars using the least petrol, and by parking a bit further away and walking, mostly avoid the parking fees.

We agree with Ray that cars are not needed:

1) in cities, which could be seen first by public transport

2) in Italy, Portugal, Spain, Morocco and Turkey, all of which, in our experience, have cheap, efficient public transport; Norway (buses); Switzerland (with a holiday pass), and possibly Germany and Austria; and

Eastern Europe, where the cities are most important, public transport is cheap, and cars are sometimes stolen, and

3) for a long-distance walk or cycling trip with public transport access.

For Australians having spent thousands to fly abroad, it is false economy to miss out on many of the best sights that can only be reached by car.

KAKADU: HELP SAFEGUARD THIS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

by Carole Beales

Many club members have enjoyed the wonders of Kakadu National Park and returned to share with us their tales, slides and memories. If you have been thinking about a visit now is a good time as the Federal Government has given approval for ERA Limited to mine for uranium at Jabiluka which is right in the middle of this unique area. The local Mirrar Aboriginal people are strongly opposed to the mine and the European Union and the Australian Senate have stated that Australia should not be adding to unsafe nuclear power and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The tailings dam for storage of waste is to be built 500 metres from a major wetland system. We all know that accidents happen and any problems here would be disastrous for the whole area.

What you can do to help:

- Write to politicians and express your horror. Ask friends, colleagues and family to do the same.
- Attend the RALLY on Sunday 5th April, 12pm at First Fleet Park, Circular Quay-speakers, music, cultural events. This is an issue of concern to all Australians.
- Make a donation of your time or funds to the Jabiluka Campaign c/- The Wilderness Society, PO Box 928, Broadway 2037.
- Visit Kakadu now. The Mirrar Aboriginal people are arranging a blockade at the proposed mine site starting on 23rd March 1998. Transport available.

VIVA LA DIFFERENCE - OR WALK IN THE PYRENEES

by Peter Rossel

The second and final instalment of Peter's Spanish walk. Last month saw Peter and Roy survive rain, fog, mist and the wrong track to arrive at Hotel Portua: un hotel tres bon marche. Read on...

14th September 1997 Having enjoyed a good breakfast prepared by our still slightly inebriated cook, we left Hotel Portua in high spirits to return to the village of Sare, some kilometres up the road. In the near distance gunshots could be heard, reminding us the hunting season had started. The village square which also functions as Pelote court was being prepared for today's big match (Pelote a Basque outdoor game comparable to squash). We would have liked to stay longer in this friendly and picturesque Basque village but today's objective, *git d'etappe Ferme Esteben*, was still some 7 to 8 hours away with a long, hot day forecast.

At about 10am we left Sare and followed a narrow track towards the Spanish border and subsequently the small village of Ainhua, where we arrived at noon. The track wound through attractive undulating farming and forestry country. En route we met a group of local hunters who proudly displayed the one hare they had bagged. Invitations were extended to come to Australia and hunt our "cochons sauvages" (wild pigs), roaming the country side in abundance. Eyes lit up, hands were shaken and it was "bon chasser et au revoir", whilst they wished us "bon courage et bon route".

After lunch we followed the steep track to col de Trois-Croix (570m), presenting spectacular views of sunny valleys and mountain slopes all around. The col was an alpine meadow with a small chapel and three huge crosses symbolising the crucifixion. Next came col - Zucutta about an hour away. The unmarked track, littered with stones and rocks slowed our progress, but gradually improved and became alpine meadows. On

top we stretched out to enjoy the views and find the down hill track to Ferme Esteben. After some wandering around, the well hidden track was located even faint traces of white and red paint markings indicating the GR - 10 could be seen on a rock face.

Ferme Esteben is an isolated farm with a small restaurant and gite d'etappe. The farmer told us a German couple was staying in the hut but no other visitors had been here for quite some time. The stone hut offered great views of the valleys below and could accommodate about fifteen people comfortably. Once settled we sat around for a chat and a cup of tea before going to the farm for dinner. The farmers wife served a tasty and generous meal supplemented by caraffes of Spanish red. It was late when the party broke up and had a last look at the clear, star sprinkled sky before turning in for the night.

15th September 1997 Today we can afford a late start. Our objective is the village of Birdarray, according to the topo guide only four hours away.

It was already warm when we made our way to col - des Veaux (540m) and followed the ridge along the Spanish border up to col - de Mehatche (716m). As on the previous day the ridges consisted mainly of alpine meadows, offering great views in all directions.

Occasionally we came across small herds of goats and horses. The leading animal usually carried a bell around its neck. We continued along the border till col - d'Artzey where we had to make our way down to Bidarray, faintly visible in the valley far below. Large birds circled overhead, presumably eagles and buzzards. Some swooped past us with a rush of air as we sat down to enjoy this magnificent, all around scenery. The hardly visible steep track leading to the valley seemed only suitable for goats with no fear of heights!

Slowly we set off, one wrong step could result in a nasty tumble over the edge. My

adjustable walking stick proved invaluable. Eventually the track improved and the valley floor was safely reached. At a mountain stream we had a refreshing dip and drank the last of our water, Bidarray was only an hour away.

At the village edge the gite d'etappe was easily located. It looked like a large ski lodge which in fact it was. The caretaker advised we were the only guests. Accommodation for the night was Fr.50 each, including towels!

Bidarray consists of an upper and lower part, the latter mainly for the locals. The upper part had a few hotels and a church dating back to 1625. Having first sampled the local ale we then headed down town for a meal and a chat with the locals. This was a very pleasant affair and we returned to our lodge much later than intended. Tomorrow would be a harder day!

16th September 1997 Bright and sunny day. On our way at 7am when still pleasantly cool. Our objective, the village of St. Etienne de Baigorry was about eight hours away including some stiff hill climbs. First on the programme was Pic - d'Iparla (1044m). The top was reached at about 1pm. We were a bit behind schedule, water supply was low and I suffered some sore toes as well! We figured that St. Etienne would not be reached before 7pm, if we followed the planned route. Fortunately the map showed a bad weather escape route to the hamlet of Urdos from where it would be an easy five kilometre to St. Etienne. In view of the circumstances it was decided to take this route. Also the topo guide mentioned the existence of a cafe, that sealed the deal! We proceeded to col-d'Harrieta (808m) the start of the track to Undos where we arrived at about 4pm.

The hamlet was only a small group of farm buildings with some nasty dogs, but no cafes or any other sign of humanity. Instead we found a water tap and had a welcome drink and wash. I changed my boots for sandals, what a relief! An hour later we walked into St. Etienne, located the gite d'etappe behind a large ancient Basque farm and moved in as no

one could be raised at the farm except a friendly watch dog. Then into the village for a drink and dinner.

Tomorrow's destination, St Jean - Pied - de - Port is about 10 kilometres away which could mean a walk along the road due to absence of public transport. An excellent dinner was enjoyed at a local restaurant. Upon returning to our gite we were greeted by a very charming young lady, the farmers daughter who came to collect the rent, Fr 48 each.

During conversation she kindly offered to drive us to St. Jean the following day. The offer was gladly accepted, departure time set at 8am.

17 September 1997 Arrived in St. Jean as arranged and dropped our packs at the railway station before setting out for some sight seeing in this magnificent, ancient Basque town. Caught the late pm train to Bayonne and arrived back at the Paris - Madrid to be welcomed by Patrice, our friendly host. Booked seats on the GTV train to Paris for tomorrow. Patrice kindly arranged our hotel accommodation in Paris near Gare Montparnasse and gave me the address of a super camping shop "Le Vieux Campeur", near the Sorbonne - Rue des Ecoles. It was now time to proceed to "Le Bistrot Ste. Cluque" for the farewell dinner to this lovely ancient and friendly Basque country.

Before departing the following morning, Patrice was presented with the Australian *Chateau Cardboard* wine bladder to be used on his future exploits in the Pyrenees as a walker and mountaineer. The train journey to Paris was fast and pleasant. After a few days of R&R in Paris our ways parted. My solo walk from Belfort, direction Strassbourg through the Vosges and Alsace-Lorraine was about to commence. But that is another story.

CHANGES: Changes to name, address or phone numbers should be sent ASAP to Membership Secretary: Barry Wallace.

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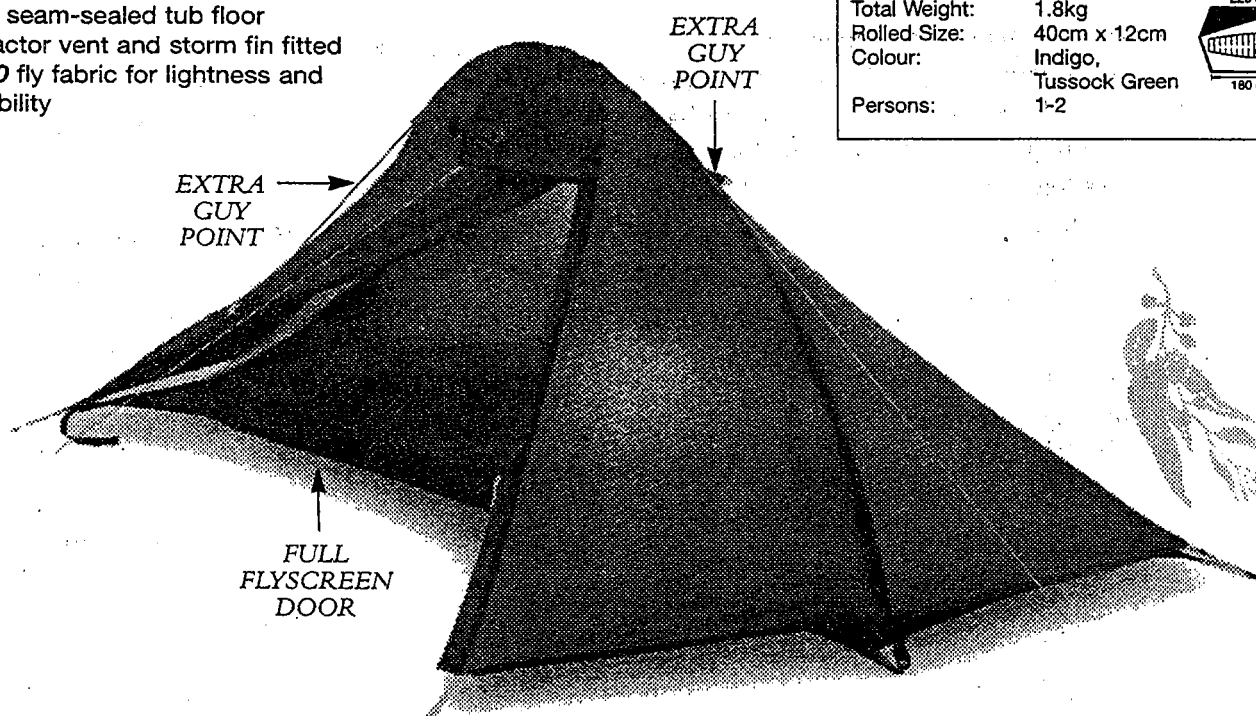
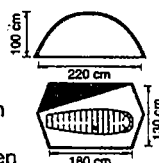
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SELLING THE PARKS

by Alex Colley

The NPWS has recently issued two draft strategy reports. The first covers access, the second covers Draft Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy. Access to parks is already adequate. All can be reached by road or rail, they are open to the public and there are 2636 km. of public or park roads, 158 camping grounds, 400 picnic areas, 115 lookouts and 57 visitor centres within them.

Increased access could therefore only mean more roads, or opening some or all of the 7,000 km. of fire trails and management tracks to vehicular and equestrian use. The Tourism Strategy report confirms this view and adds a further dimension. It aims to achieve ecologically sustainable development. Parks are to be "marketed" with a view to increasing revenue. "Key Regional Destinations" and marketing campaigns are to be developed and actively promoted, World Heritage and Biosphere Reserves are to be important components of promotion on an international level; information will be provided about commercial tour opportunities and advertised in the print media.

The Strategy gives prominence to conservation. It gives priority to "the need to achieve the conservation of the protected areas system, the need to achieve ecologically sustainable visitor use." The community, it is stated, "is entitled to experience national parks in a way that does not damage the environment." The "desired future" is "Firstly to ensure that the protected areas of NSW fulfil their primary function, the conservation of heritage values." The S.B.W. could not have expressed it better. However the Strategy Report admits to a trade-off between heritage conservation and visitor use and the need to repair damage. "Nature tourism is defined as *all* visitor use of protected areas" and includes "recreation pursuits such as horseriding and using 4WD for access."

These privileged users are incorrectly described as "stakeholders." The parks are

not created for the use of any specific group. The stakeholders are the people of NSW

It would be possible to have greatly increased visitor use with little or no environmental damage. Entrance fees would cause no damage, through car usage creates a need for parking areas. In heavily used parks bus transport could replace private cars (as in some U.S. parks). Heavily used sites would need to be "hardened."

Damage to park roads by tourist buses is repairable. If essential facilities were concentrated in "key regional destinations" the natural environment of the rest of the park would be little affected. This is not however the aim of the access lobby, which wants to spread access across the parks.

In order to "market" the parks, saleable facilities are necessary. These would take several forms. The sale of permits for "controlled access," which would involve the marketing of the trails within the park, would mean the wide dispersion of damage. If provision must be made on public lands for off road vehicular and equestrian recreation the recommendation of the State Pollution Control Commission, that special areas be made available, should be implemented. As the Strategy states, "Public lands such as State Forest, Crown Lands and Local Council managed lands may also provide a range of vehicle touring opportunities." Both State Forests and Local Councils opposed the admittance of off road vehicles at the SPCC Inquiry. The October 1997 Report of the NSW Regulatory Review Committee reveals that only five areas have been provided for recreational vehicle use and only two are actively used. It therefore appears that the NPWS, which also opposed 4WD intrusion, is the "bunny."

Even more damaging is the intention to provide "a large range of accommodation where appropriate - from bush camping areas to caravan sites cabins and lodges." Hotels and resorts are not mentioned, but, judging from Kosciuszko development, they will be

included. These facilities may be provided by the Service itself, as in the Warrumbungles, or by the leasing of parkland to private enterprise, as at Kosciuszko. Commercial opportunities are to be "enhanced." Staff is expected to be "trained in business management" so as to "significantly improve return of revenue." Commercial enhancement involves land clearing and the provision of essential services such as water, sewerage and electricity. These facilities, together with shops, coffee lounges, golf courses etc are provided in abundance outside the parks. Their provision within the parks simply deprives the local business community of patronage. The policy of "controlled access" means that 4Wd and equestrian organisations will be granted permits, at a price, to use the trails within the parks. The granting of this privilege to favoured organisations is a denial of public land use rights. Access may be controlled, but the immeasurable damage to flora and fauna, the cutting of deep impressions as vehicles tyre spin their way to gain traction, the widening of narrow trails,

the rutting of hillsides, the erosion (as described in the State Pollution Control Commission Report) and the impact of shod hooves on dirt trails cannot be controlled.

The reason for the presentation of the strategy reports is unstated. There can be no reason for them other than to open the parks to off road vehicular and equestrian access and to raise revenue from commercial development. The access report was no doubt inspired by the desire to win the support of the anti-conservation lobby, as was the reduction of the nominated Wollemi Wilderness by over 100,000 ha., but it may well enhance the overwhelming support for conservation measured in opinion polls, which was a factor in the election of the Carr and Howard Governments. The object of the tourism report is to provide justification for the raising of revenue by the commercialisation of parks at the expense of the natural environment.

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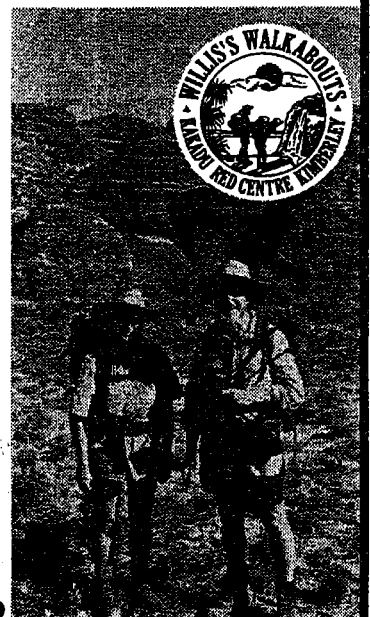
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February 1998 General Meeting by Barry Wallace

It was around 2020 and there were some 16 or so members present when the president called the meeting to order and got proceedings underway. The only apology was for John Hogan, so we moved on to welcome our new members. Richard Darke and Rollin Burford were welcomed into membership in the usual way.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and received with no matters arising. There was also a dearth of correspondence, with the secretary reduced to reading offers of accommodation in Katoomba.

The treasurer was able to open with the happy news that the annual audit was complete. The report for the month indicated that we began with a balance of \$3,893, acquired income of \$384, disbursed \$394 and closed with a balance of \$3,791.

The walks reports opened with no report for Paul McCann's Buckenbowra State Forest walk over the Australia Day weekend. Bit of an anticlimax really. Bill Holland led a party of 8 on his Danjerra Dam area trip that same weekend. Conditions were hot and not greatly relieved by the thunderstorm that turned up. Tony Holgate had 10 on his Upper Ettrema walk which was re arranged into a patchwork or trips in the South-East Forest because of closures due to bushfires or threats of bushfires. Don Brooks packed a great deal of variety into his Saturday walk out from Springwood for the party of 14. They had rain, a storm, fine weather, some swims and numerous leeches. There was no report for Ken Cheng's Waterfall to Otford trip on the Sunday. Alan Doherty's midweek walk also failed to produce a report at the meeting.

Kenn Clacher's two, one day canyon trips went, but no details were available to the meeting. John Poleson reported a party of 9 on his Edgecliff to South Head urban stroll on the Saturday. The day was pleasant and

punctuated by swims. Ken Smith rerouted his Medlow Bath trip on the same day to Faulconbridge for the party of two. Greta James reported 9.5 (well that's what she said) on her Bundeena to Bundeena Sunday walk. Conditions were hot, so they resorted to swimming to control their temperature. Bill Holland was out of town when the date for his Berowra area walk came around, so it was scrubbed. Anne Maguire let the party of 13 on her Sunday walk out from Blackheath through storm, tempest and hail, on an otherwise perfectly all-right day.

David Trinder had 12 on his extended walk down the Overland Track in Tasmania during February. Somehow or other they managed to slip the walk into a spell of fine weather.

There were no details for Ian Rennard's Tuesday midweek walk on the Tuesday. Jim Percy postponed his walk out from Lawson over the weekend of 7, 8 February, to a date to be advised. Rosemary MacDougal's walk from Winmalee to Faulconbridge on the Saturday went, with an undisclosed number of participants, in rather warm conditions. There was no report for Zol Bodlay's Magic Gourmet Lunch walk on the same day. Tony Crichton experienced the vacillation that is sometimes characteristic of day walk starters when the weather is variable; with excursions in the number of intending and would be walkers persisting up to and indeed beyond the start of his Sunday walk in Erskine Creek. The final number was 16, conditions were very hot and humid with numerous swims. Frank Grennan had 6 walkers, a stray dog and numerous leeches on his Sunday walk out from Grose Vale. The same day Sandy Johnson had four walkers on his West Head walk which went to program despite a storm. There was no report for Ian Rennard's mid week walk around Middle Harbour, which concluded the walks reports for the month.

With the Conservation Secretary away we had no Conservation report, and with no Confederation meeting in the intervening period, no Confederation report.

General business saw passage of a motion the we write to the federal defence minister and NSW state Premier, pointing out the increasing access problems along the foreshore between Middle Head and Clifton Gardens and requesting assistance to maintain and facilitate access for recreational purposes. This all relates to the curious intention of the federal government to permit the defence department, a federal servant, to sell off federally owned land to reduce its dependence on federal funding. There is an even more Gilbertian suggestion that the federal government might pay itself moneys out of the Telstra derived conservation fund to purchase the land it already owns, from itself, for conservation purposes of course. I hope you are paying attention at the back there. The announcements followed and the meeting closed at 2105.

FOOTNOTES by Patrick James

I see from my calendar that this month celebrates the Greek, Hungary and Mauritius national days, for our Kiwi cousins Taranaki, Otago and Southland Anniversaries, for those from Old South Wales St. David's day, Canberra Day for John, Kim and Co. and of course St. Patrick's Day for those lucky, fortunate people with an Irish heritage.

This month Jan Holland, daughter of Bill, gave birth to a daughter: a sister to Christopher. Mother father, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews all doing well.

Young Tine Mathews celebrates a significant birthday this month. And when is a day both gray and sunny? For George Gray on his significant birthday this month. Happy birthday Tine and George.

I understand some members are searching for back issues of the Magazine, viz issues 18 and 19. Well dear readers little do they know that the Issue numbers were mixed up, 18 was printed on the front cover and 19 printed inside on the contents page, one magazine with two numbers, cunning what! It was only after looking at practically every magazine I was able to determine that September 1997 was actually Issue No. 754.

ODE TO DAVID TRINDER'S 1997 CHRISTMAS WALK

by Karen Brading

It's a story of a man and lady
Who were bringing up a boy and 3 girls
All of them love walking with their parents
The youngest one in curls

Now the fella had a little brother
Who carried a baby in his pack
She awoke at night every hour
But slept on the track

It's a story of our fearless leader
Whose yellow pants are really quite a sight
He goes searching for map and compass
In the dead of night

It's a story of his partner Carol
Who brought along a daughter of her own
Selina has hair which is the blondest
But it is not her own

It's a story of speedy Jitka
Who had a tiny blister on her foot
On a walk it burst and got infected
And now she hobbles to the toot

It's a story of Geoff Bradley
Who brought down John Carlson in his car
John felt quite sick and went to Cooma
So Geoff didn't walk too far

It's a story of John and Erith
Who missed a walk because they did sleep in
They climbed Koskuszko a day later
and were blasted in the wind

It's a story of Joy and Ian
Who came down as quickly as they can
They keep their curtains drawn down low
To hide the cats in their van

Till one day when these walkers got together
And they knew that it was much more than a
hunch
That this group would join the Brading family
That's the way we became a crazy bunch