



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.

Editor: Patrick James

5/2 Hardie Street Neutral Bay 2089

Telephone 9904 1515

Business Manager: Elizabeth Miller

1 The Babette, Castlecrag, 2068

Telephone 9958 7838

Production Manager: Frances Holland

Printers: Kenn Clacher, Tom Wenman,

Barrie Murdoch, Margaret Niven

& Les Powell

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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September 1998

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NEW ZEALAND by Christine

Austin

After our successful family walk to the Walls of Jerusalem (Central Plateau, Tasmania) we decided our teenage children might be ready to try a serious walk in New Zealand. Richard, Vivien and Melanie Winthorpe were interested in coming, so two weeks in the South Island were arranged during mid January 1998.

The question of where to walk involved some discussion. We didn't want to repeat past trips (given the availability of so many in New Zealand), we didn't want a hard trip, nor a tame one. Commencing the trip by jet boat sounded novel and appealing, so the decision was the Wilkin & Young rivers walk, these being tributaries of the Makarora River which flows into the northern end of Lake Wanaka in Otago Province. And so, after a week's touring by mini bus, we arrived one hot afternoon at Makarora. First, we called into the Wilkin Jet Boat Tours to confirm our ride and watched the little aircraft landing in the paddock beside the highway on what was described as - "Beware Active Runway". We spent that night in the A Frame huts in the Makarora campground.

Day 1 of our walk - January 23rd - was gloomy and rainy, but having been assured these were morning showers we decided there was no point in vacillating and departed at the appointed time - 10 am. We all piled roughly into the back of a truck and were jolted down beside the Wilkin River.

Despite the rain, the jet boat ride was a great thrill. The rain and speed at which we travelled made the eyes sting, but one had to admire the skill of the driver Mike, as the boat bounced along the Makarora and was deftly swung into the Wilkin. Needing only 10 cm of water clearance the boat hurtled over shallow shingle and around tight curves, avoiding rocks and floating logs.

After half an hour of this exhilaration, but feeling a little disappointed that the view was obscured by constant rain, Mike dropped us a little downstream of Kerin Forks Hut. Ten minutes later, and already feeling a little sodden, we ate morning tea on the verandah, then decided that we may as well keep walking - Top Forks Hut was supposedly 6 hours away.

At first the walking was pleasant enough - beautiful New Zealand beech forest which was so delightful to behold after a break, for us, of 20 years. But the rain continued unabated and the side streams were rising. The Wilkin River roared beside us, a dangerous torrent.

At lunch we squatted by a rock in Wonderland, feeling anything but wonderful. We knew that the water was penetrating the packs, although some of us had pack covers. Jumboland was a necklace of waterfalls, too numerous to count. Here we negotiated some rough patches of rock and ferns beside the impassable Wilkin and then calculated it should be only one hour to the hut.

But the most alarming part of the day was to come. Now the raging Wilkin swung sharply against a small but rugged bluff. Had we read the log book more carefully at Kerin Forks Hut, we would have known how to avoid it, but our ignorance meant we had no choice. Tiptoeing around several small narrow ledges on the bluff, clinging to vines and roots, with the ever present torrent several metres below us, we finally reached the flats near the hut feeling a little harrassed and tired. But, oh joy, there was the hut waiting for us, empty, and, at 7 pm, what a wonderful sight it was. Of course it was still raining!

Our rest that night was disturbed only by the occasional avalanche from Mount Pollux. The next day was glorious - we awoke to find we were in a heavenly place, at the

junction of the North and South Wilkin Rivers.

Our trip notes mentioned two possible side trips from Top Forks Hut. One was to walk up the South Wilkin towards Rabbit Pass, the other was to visit Lake Lucidus by walking up the North Wilkin. We decided to do both of these. First - a massive drying effort, the entire contents of our saturated packs dangling over the wooden verandah, steaming in the resplendent sunshine.

Leaving Melanie, Noni and Dane to play cards, and Vivien to relax, (they thought more walking was a bad idea) Craig, Richard and I climbed through pristine beech forest, delighting in the opportunity to look upwards without the encumbrance of a parka hood. Soon we reached a valley where a huge snow bridge spanned the South Wilkin which roared out from a vast, dark and yawning chasm. Higher up the valley walls were a jumble of waterfalls, so many that we believed we had reached Waterfall face, near Rabbit Pass (we hadn't as it turned out).

The scenery alone up the South Wilkin was worth the climb but the vegetation was stunning. The track wound through large groves of Native Fuschia and in the rocky parts, Mt Cook lilies were flowering.

Returning to Top Forks Hut, we found the others chatting to new arrivals, both of whom were Australian, but one lived in New Zealand. This person, Bruce (who was an old walking acquaintance of mine) entertained us with stories of early explorers, particularly Douglas, who explored this valley and many others. A nearby mountain was named after his dog - thus Mt Betsy Jane.

The day was wearing on (5 pm) but we couldn't waste a long golden New Zealand evening. The South Wilkin had now subsided so, using the approved technique, we crossed without any problem (it would

have been different eight hours before). All of us came now, the rest having revived the others. We headed up the true right bank of the North Wilkin, glad that we did not have to cross it. A rather wild looking tributary was negotiated and then we climbed a ridge between it and the North Wilkin, through the beech forest, then on to Disappearing Lake, nestled at the base of Mt Castor and its icefall. Then it was on to Lake Lucidus, through beautiful alpine meadows. Lake Lucidus was a true moraine formed lake whose edges resembled a moonscape. Here we lingered for a few moments before retracing our steps to Top Forks Hut after a really wonderful day in the Wilkin Valley.

Day 3 and it was another sunny day! Feeling rested and confident after yesterday we walked back down the Wilkin to Kerin Forks Hut, in awe and wonder at the different perspective a sunny day reveals. The waterfalls were no longer hammering down and some had ceased. And crossing the Wilkin near that fateful spot was a mere trifle ! As afternoon approached and the weather improved, we enjoyed the sunlight dancing through the beech forest and glinting on the milky white river.

We were carrying tents and could have camped near Kerin Forks Hut, but the sandflies drove us indoors. Vivien and I had a quick wash in the river, the sandflies causing the 'quick'. The Wilkin, now enlarged by the Siberia Stream, was declared fordable by Craig who negotiated its three braids with a big stick. This was a good thing as the party's intention next day was to cross it and climb into the Siberia Valley.

Day 4 and as we climbed the forest clad ridge towards the Siberia Stream we met the hut warden. He was based at Siberia Hut but travelled from hut to hut to ensure that all was in order. Entering the Siberia Valley, an extensive alpine meadow awaited us, far less cattle trodden than the Wilkin. Here and there paradise ducks glided over the

glistening rapids and the still pools were as clear as crystal. Above us towered wild ridges and waterfalls, looking inaccessible to all but the toughest of humans. I have always been grateful that this day was fine (not always sunny) for the Siberia Valley was the most beautiful I have ever seen.

Siberia Hut was a palace, by any hut standards. With a large private area for the hut warden, the hut was clean and tidy and the window screens meant we could enjoy our lunch in peace. It was with reluctance that we departed but we needed to aim higher under Gillespie Pass in order to cross it next day. Leaving the Siberia Valley, there was a steep climb through beech forest into the much narrower valley of the Gillespie. However there were some snowgrass ledges available on which we camped. The weather was again looking ominous, but the rain held off until 9pm while we relaxed on the snowgrass without sandflies.

Rain drove us to bed and greeted us next morning. Again the weather forecast given to us (this time at Siberia Hut) was incorrect. As we commenced climbing Gillespie Pass the rain grew heavier. So did the wind! The glaciers on Mt. Awful were completely obscured and the only inhabitants of the area were the keas. Despite good parkas we were drenched through and were most reluctant to linger on the pass when we reached it. Most members of the party were looking very unimpressed by the situation and I was thinking, " What am I doing bringing my family here ?"

The descent from Gillespie Pass to the Young Valley did not give us any respite. The incline was extremely steep and water poured everywhere. Even my agile husband and son managed to slip.

Arriving at the bottom, we collected everybody and walked to the Young Hut, about half an hour downstream. By now the hillsides were streaming and the thought of camping was horrifying! And there was

Young Hut, perched on a small ridge, wind prone but avalanche proof!

Empty or not? Yes, occupied, but by a party of really friendly Kiwis and an Englishman both of whom moved instantly, and left us a clear table from which we gratefully ate our lunch. It was obvious sleeping was going to be tight, but as the afternoon progressed more wet and weary souls arrived. Two Danes, an Israeli and another Australian. The atmosphere was extremely cosmopolitan and the friendliness of our companions made it a very pleasant evening.

Built in 1981, Young hut was small but a lifesaver for us. All night the rain teemed and the wind roared, rocking the hut to its foundations. Not many people slept well that night. Sometime later we heard the following story from an old friend of Craig's. Her party, staying in a New Zealand hut, had packed up during a windy night, feeling that the departure of their hut was imminent.

Another wet morning dawned - our last day. Day 6. We planned to walk down the Young River to the Makarora junction and use the radio there to call the jetboat. We knew, sight unseen, we would be unable to cross both rivers. Richard and Craig felt an early start was in order, so as we left our beds at 6 am, the Danes rolled in and occupied mine. We said goodbye to our companions and prepared to face the tempest. Once into the beech forest the wind subsided and the walk beside the Young became quite pleasant. The constant roaring of its many tributaries and waterfalls had now become a familiar sound. At the junction of the North and South Young we ate lunch in, unbelievably, a shelter shed. We were fortunate that our overpants gave protection from the sandflies. The North Young was a major river in itself so the sight of a large, well constructed bridge across it was a relief. It wasn't long before we arrived at the Makarora and there was the radio, complete with shelter shed and seats.

The DOC man (Department of Conservation) said Mike would be up in half an hour and sure enough he was. Downstream we flew, exactly as we had started, in the rain!

Participants: Vivien Winthorpe (w years), Richard Winthorpe (x years), Melanie Winthorpe (16 years), Christine Austin (y years), Craig Austin (z years), Dane Austin (16 years) & Noni Austin (13 years).

The following Westland poem aptly describes our impressions of the New Zealand mountains.

RAIN

It rained and rained and rained
The average fall was well maintained
And when the tracks were simply bogs
It started raining cats and dogs

After a drought of half an hour
We had a most refreshing shower
And then most curious thing of all
A gentle rain began to fall

Next day but one was fairly dry
Save for one deluge from the sky
Which wetted the party to the skin
And then at last the Rain set in

Anonymous

This poem was published in The Sydney Bushwalker Sep. 1986 and in the 70th Anniversary edition of the Sydney Bushwalker. However since the author sent it in, and since Sydney has had more than it's fair share of rain, why not publish it again. Editor.

Govetts Leap Track Closure.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service wishes to advise you of the temporary closure of the walking track between Govetts Leap and Junction Rock in the Grose Valley, Blackheath. This is the track which leads to Blue Gum forest from Govetts Leap.

Engineering advise is that the steel stairs on this track are unsafe. The NPWS will endeavour to have these stairs replaced as soon as possible. Until that time walkers should use the tracks from Perrys and Evans

Lookouts for gaining access to the Grose Valley. All other tracks remain open in the Grose.

It would be appreciated if this information could be disseminated to your members and the general public as soon as possible. We apologise for the inconvenience. We will endeavour to inform you when the track re-opens.

Yours faithfully

Greg Wellham

Manager, Blue Mountains Central for

Director-General

14 August, 1998

How a Compass Works

No matter where you stand on earth you can hold a compass in your hand and it will point toward the north pole. What an unbelievably neat and amazing thing! Imagine that you are in the middle of the ocean, and you are looking all around you in every direction and all you can see is water, and it is overcast so you cannot see the sun... how in the world would you know which way to go unless you had a compass that told you which way is "up"? Long before GPS satellites and other high-tech navigational aids, a compass gave humans an easy and inexpensive way to know which way to go. But what makes a compass work the way it does?

A compass is an extremely simple device. A magnetic compass consists of a small, lightweight magnet balanced a nearly frictionless pivot point. The magnet is generally called a needle. One end of the needle is often marked "N", for North, or coloured in some way to indicate that it points toward north. That's all there is to a compass.

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August 1998 General Meeting

by Barry Wallace.

The meeting began at around with some 18 or so members present. There was one apology, for Denise Shaw. The minutes of the July general meeting were read and received with no matters arising.

Correspondence included a letter from Susan Garland thanking people for their letters of support and best wishes. We also wrote to our new member Bob McIlwaine.

This month, for a bit of variety we had the treasurers report, presented by Don Brooks. It seems we acquired income of \$3,481, spent in the order of \$1,988 and closed with a balance of \$15,407.

The weekend of 10, 11, 12 July began the walks reports for the month with an exceptionally cold weekend. Oliver Crawford had a party of eight on his Wollemi National Park weekend walk and Kris Stephenson had three on her Grose Valley walk the same weekend. For the day walks, Greg Bridge reported 6 on his Saturday walk from Perrys Lookdown, and Ken Cheng would have reported 7 and more details for his walk out from Faulconbridge the same day if the report for that particular walks had not been mislaid. Bill Hope had 14 on his Sunday walk out from Carlons Farm in the Megalong Valley. The mid week walk that week saw Bill Holland with a party of nine on his Bondi to Coogee Tuesday walk.

The reports for the weekend of 17, 18, 19 July hove in sight with nary a mention of time constraints or the like, so we settled down to the usual format of reporting as far as could be determined. Maurice Smith led eight on his Ettrema area walk and Wayne Steele reported occasional light showers for the party of eight on his walk up the Jenolan river out from Carlons Farm. Possibly as a legacy from the long dry spell all the rocks more slippery than usual, with both Michelle Powell and Wayne taking impromptu dips in the Jenolan River on the Sunday. After sampling the treacherous going in Galong

Creek the party let discretion take the better part of valour and exited via a convenient ridge before any other more serious adventures occurred. The Coolana working bee/training weekend also took place this weekend. Margaret Sheens reported a party of four for the City to Surf training walk on the Saturday. Errol Sheedy had 4 on his Sunday walk from Heathcote to Sutherland but Alan Mewett, usually a fount of detail in such matters, provided no numbers for his Marramarra National park Sunday walk.

July 24, 25, 26 started poorly with no report for had Jan Mohandas' weekend walk in Bungonia Reserve. Morie Ward reported six on his Saturday start stroll to Bluegum Forest from the Mount Hay Road. Ken Cheng's day walk on the Saturday in Brisbane Waters National Park went, with the party of eight lunching under a convenient overhang due to the wet conditions. Sandy Johnson had four on his Saturday walk in Kuringai chase. It appears the Sunday weather was similar, with Frank Grennan reporting an initial registration of interest from some 22 people dwindling to 10 starters in the misty damp at the start of the walk. They returned to the cars by 1630 with honour.satisfied.

There was no report for Ian Rennard's mid week walk from North Sydney.

Bill Hope's weekend walk down the Nattai over July 31, August 1, 2 was cancelled when Bill was called overseas at short notice. Bill Holland cancelled his Deep Pass base camp trip and there was no report for Kenn Clacher's cross country ski trip. Don Brooks reported seven on his Saturday walk in Berowra Valley Bushland Park and Jan Pieters had 12 on his Upper Grose walk on the Sunday. Anne Maguire had 26 on her Sunday walk out from Wentworth Falls.

Wilf Hilder's midweek, Great North Walk Missing Link, walk on the Tuesday saw the party of six dwindle to four over what was described as a nice walk.

The weekend of 7, 8, 9, August saw the beginning of the deluge. Bill Capon yielded to better counsel and cancelled his Gaspers Mountain walk due to reported flooding at Ilford. Eddy Giacomel did something the same for his Megalong Valley walk. Alan Mewett cancelled his Saturday walk in the Lower Blue Mountains; the Royal was closed so Errol Sheedy cancelled his Sunday walk from Bundeena to Waterfall. Nigel Weaver reported a remnant party of four on his Brooklyn to Mount Wondabyne Sunday walk, on which damp note we ended the walks reports for the month.

Conservation report brought mention of the "Visions for the new Millennium" conference/clash/fixture recently conducted under the auspices of NPWS. Reports indicated that the process seemed to go well, but the general opinion was that we should judge by outcomes rather than fine words. If someone could just pass the parsnips?

Confederation report indicated that budget deliberations have been referred to a sub-committee. Walking permits will be issued

for the Tasmanian walking areas for the first time this summer. NPWS are reported to have purchased a portion of Carlon's Farm in the Megalong Valley with a view to maintaining the access point for walking parties. The NSW government has announced eight new National Park areas. Confederation is to write congratulating them on the achievement. There were no items for mention when the call went out for General Business.

Announcements brought news of another step in the quest for the perfect General Meeting. The new format will feature slide shows after the business is concluded. You will understand, I hope, gentle reader if this feature is not covered in the notes. Geoff Wagg as I recall once wrote up a walks report as a series of descriptions of snapshots. It seemed to work fairly well. I wonder if Geoff would be interested in the contract. This shot here is the chairman gonging the gong to close the meeting at 2101. The guy with the tape recorder nodding off in the front row? Don't know what you mean.

The Patagonian Andes

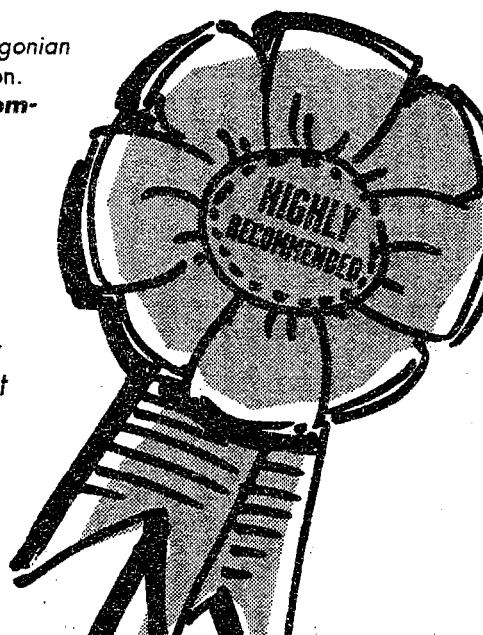
The new edition of the Lonely Planet guide, *Trekking in the Patagonian Andes* lists nine companies which offer guided treks in the region. Willis's Walkabouts is the only one described as **"highly recommended"**.

Here's your chance to find out why.

Our December-January trip will include three major walks: one in the region near Mt Fitzroy in southern Argentina, one in Torres del Paine National Park in southern Chile and one on Navarino Island which the Lonely Planet book describes as *"a superb subantarctic wilderness of windswept ranges and alpine moors (which) offers the most southerly trekking in the world."*

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PILOT PIROUETTE by Kenn Clacher

Yes Virginia! There sometimes is enough snow in the Snowy Mountains in winter to ski to the Pilot. Ian Wolfe will no doubt provide a full account in his inimitable style at some time in the future, but in the meantime, there is some spare space in the newsletter that must be filled. Consider this a pre-emptive strike.

The Pilot is an impressive feature (hill, mountain, mound, bump, peak) on the Great Dividing Range between Kosciuszko and the Victorian Alps – something of a Jagungal of the South. It is visible from many parts of the Main Range in the vicinity of Mt Kosciuszko. In turn, views from its summit take in a large part of the high country in the South-Eastern part of Australia. It attains an altitude of 1830m (Jagungal is around 2050m) and is only 5km from where the straight bit and the wiggly bit of the NSW - Victoria border meet.

A ski trip to the Pilot is not something that you can do any day, or any week, or even any winter. It requires impeccable timing, or perhaps the right connections. Ian, with his usual foresight published a "plan B" in case there would be not enough snow, but by the weekend before the trip was considering plan E – Friday Flat or Front Valley I think it was.

Our approach would be from Dead Horse Gap, about 35km each way, along the Cascade and Cowambat Fire Trails, mostly more or less along the top of the Great Dividing Range. For about 15km of the journey from Dead Horse Gap, the elevation of the route is only 1250 – 1300m, hence the need for a good snowfall if one wants a ski trip rather than a walking trip.

Ian seemed to get it all right by scheduling, some months in advance, a four-day trip timed for just after the great late July snowfall of '98, when it snowed in Western Australia, Adelaide and lots of other places besides, including the Snowy Mountains. On the drive in, the snowdrifts began just after

passing through Cooma, promising a reasonable chance of actually being able to ski all the way to our destination.

There was no chance of driving into Thredbo Diggings or Ngarigo to camp on Thursday night because of the large amount of snow covering the road, so we had to make do with the side of the road near the entrance to the Diggings. It was appearing at that stage that if there were to be any problems with the snow, it would be that there would be ample, but that it would be somewhat soft and hard work to push through. And so it turned out to be.

We were away from Dead Horse Gap by 9:30 on Friday morning and arrived at Cascade Hut in time for a late lunch. Snow cover in the upper Thredbo River and around Cascade Hut was not thick, but there were no bare patches. All the way nevertheless we had to plough through some heavy going, so we had to change front man (and woman) frequently to give the track breaker some relief from his and her toils. It will be better on the way back, we told ourselves, with a firm track laid down by our outward exertions.

At this stage, because of the thinnish cover around Dead Horse Gap and Cascade Hut, at elevations of around 150 – 1600m, we were still not convinced that our quest would be successful. We pressed on regardless and the snow cover became thicker, but not firmer as we left Cascade Hut in our wake.

After camping about halfway between Cascade and Tin Mine Huts we skied on, helped by some firmness in the snow in the cold of the morning. We arrived at Tin Mines Hut around midday and decided to head towards the Pilot that afternoon with daypacks to groom a trail to help on the following day, when we would attempt to ski to the top. We skied around 5km before turning around and were able to cover the return trip in just over half the time of the outward journey, thanks to the hard work of the trail groomers.

An early start the next day had us at our furthest point of the previous day by around 9 o'clock. A further 4km or so along the fire trail brought us to the start of our climb to the summit, through tricky open forest with a good cover of fallen timber. Our progress on the climb I shall leave to Ian to recount.

On returning to the fire trail we headed back to the hut to pick up our packs and head for home. On setting a ski onto the track of two days before, so painstakingly formed by four pairs of skis surmounted by struggling skiers with heavy packs, we found to our horror that the going was just as soft and sticky as on the outward trip. So we had to just slog through it all again, having to change lead skier frequently to maintain an even pace.

Throughout the whole trip from Cascade Hut southwards the snow cover had been excellent, averaging perhaps 15 – 20 cm, even at elevations of around 1250 – 1300m. It seemed to be lightest near the Pilot, at elevations somewhat higher than on the fire trail between the two huts. Nevertheless, cover throughout the trip was never less than 100% and we had to do no walking at all. Even the side creek crossings were generally covered in snow, except on the flanks of the Pilot. Indeed on some occasions the absence of surface water, not usually a feature of Australian ski trips, was something of a problem. At our mid-hut campsite, Ian had to make an impressive scrub bash to find free water.

We did eventually make it back to Dead Horse Gap, helped from Cascade hut by the tracks of the many weekend skiers who had obviously taken advantage of the cover to ski in to the hut. No one seemed to have ventured beyond Cascade Hut however.

The obligatory stop was made on the slopes above the Thredbo River to crank out the first serious teles of the season, but the snow was – well – challenging, so we were soon off again to ski the fire trail down to the cars. That section too was not without interest, as the previous day's traffic had left a smooth

and icy surface which required some desperate snow ploughing to negotiate with any degree of control. We all survived it nevertheless and finally arrived back at the end of the trail having completed what is a once-in-a-decade (or perhaps a little more frequent) experience.

SBW SONG BOOK

The official "SBW Song Book" has been printed and is available to members at a cost of \$5.00. Now you can sing around the campfire - no longer lost for words! There have been earlier songbooks, but this version has old songs (from 1930/40 etc.) and new songs (1960/70 etc.). **Price \$5.00** (available in the Clubrooms or mailed if you include \$1.00 for postage).

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ERNIE AUSTEN: a LIFE by Clio.

Given twenty cents by his elder sister for his eighteenth birthday Ernie joined the newly formed Campsie Harriers and first indulged in long distance runs. One of the races was from Parramatta to Sydney which finished at Vic's Hotel at Moore Park. Ernie participated in this event twice, both without success.

Then an old fellow in the club Jim Penny, himself a champion walker, offered to coach any lads who were interested. Upon the advice of his coach Ernie took up walking, and being rather on the small side, undertook a course of physical culture under the direction of R L "Snowy" Baker. Although this was directed at increasing his height (it failed) his body developed so that he was always a picture of bodily grace.

His first walk was a mile handicap in November 1910 which he won. Although he continued to run (from 1914) he concentrated on walking and won his first championship in 1915. Ernie established a NSW record for the one hour walk in 1922.

In 1924 Ernie won the Australasian (Three Mile) Championship and qualified to go to the Paris Olympics. These were the Games that Harold Abrahams (*Chariots of Fire* film) won the hundred metres in the world record time of 10.6 seconds; Johnny Weissmuller won three gold medals in the swimming pool; and 'The Flying Finn', Paavo Nurmi, had five victories.

It was also Australia's most successful Olympics to date with three gold, one silver and two bronze medals of which Andrew 'Boy' Charlton won a gold and two bronze - one against Johnny Weissmuller.

There were twenty-six starters in the 10,000m walk which was held as two events. There were five judges - an Englishman, an American, a Frenchman, an Italian and one

other. In all thirteen participants were disqualified either by the French or the Italian judge though no French or Italian athlete was disqualified. *I didn't do any good - I got disqualified. I don't know why.*

Ernie's gait had never been previously questioned and apparently his feet were deemed to be 'off the ground' - possibly the Australian definition of 'heel and toe' differed to the Olympic standard. Alternatively his arms were swinging lower rather than at chest height to that used by other walkers.

I had never received a caution in a walking race in Australia and I had been racing then for 12-14 years. I had raced all over Australian and had won championships. One of the fellows disqualified had received a prize the previous week for being the fairest walker in England. An Austrian who was disqualified, protested, and was allowed to compete in the second heat. He maintain he did not realise that he had been disqualified. Well I didn't realise that I had been disqualified until an American had called out.

A French judge had warned him in the first lap of the first heat that his gait was doubtful. The American judge disqualified him in the second lap when he was going well in second place. There were other disqualifications in this round and the judges on the field were hissed and booed.

When the Austrian fronted up for the second heat all the judges objected then resigned. They had no reserve judges so anyone who wanted to be a judge could nominate. An Italian won the event in 47:49.0.

Upon returning to Australia Ernie dropped out of race walking. A friend suggested that he go over to New Zealand (c.1927). He recommenced his training and beat the local champion in a series of test races to win a

position in the team for New Zealand where he won the championship.

Upon his return to Australia he entered a race for the next weekend (winning the Australian One-mile Championship in 6:52) after which he retired. As this was the last time that the Australasian Championships were held Ernie is the current holder of the title.

Ernie was still a member of the Western Suburbs Athletics Club when, in 1932, they asked him to come out of retirement to help them win a shield competition. The thinking was if Ernie could come in at fourth position he could earn the club a valuable point. Ernie (who was still fit from his bushwalking) came in second. He turned out the next weekend and came second again.

Encouraged by the club he recommenced his training at an age of over 40 years and came first in the three mile event in the championships. In 1933 he won the NSW championships in the one and three mile events in 6:47.4 and 22:48 resp. (The latter was stride-by-stride with another competitor with Ernie breasting the tape first. He described this as the hardest race in his life, and then said he would never compete again).

He was then selected to go to Adelaide to compete in the Australian Championships. However as he realised that he was getting older and had family commitments he declined the offer and retired from competitive racing. Ernie had a cabinet full of awards for his walking feats.

Ernie's first job was as a shop boy, a junior labourer on a drilling machine, in the Everly Rail Workshops. In 1917 there was a general strike and Ernie was out of work for about two or three months. He received a letter from the Hon. Fred Flowers, whose sons were also athletes, offering an introduction to the chairman of the Meat Board. Ernie

commenced work at the abattoirs in the offal chambers "up to my ankles in shit".

He was married at the time and could not afford to toss in this job. One day he met a mate on another floor who was a meat inspector. Ernie decided that this offered better prospects and enrolled for evening classes at a Technical College and in February 1919 commenced work as a meat inspector. Ernie retired in February 1956 as Chief Meat Inspector and he and Jean went on a world trip. His wife died in 1979.

Shortly after he was married Ernie joined the Manly Surf Club and enjoyed his swimming.

Ernie thought his first proper bushwalk was from Moss Vale to Nowra with two English fellows who were in the athletic club - probably in 1916. Later trips went to Wattamolla and other areas within the reach of Sydney when there were few people walking. This was in the company of the Englishmen who had been ramblers back home.

Then Ernie started walking with his wife with one of their early jaunts being from Wentworth Falls to Camden via the Burragorang Valley. Later they walked all over Barrington Tops.

Ernie and Jean joined the Sydney Bush Walkers in its early days - they did not know anyone prior the formation of the club. One of the early trips Ernie lead was at Easter in 1928. It was the first (mixed) party to go through the Grose Valley - a photograph shows Jack Debert, Frank & Anice Duncan, Gwen Adams, Ernie & Jean.

In June 1928 Frank Duncan lead Ernie and Jack Debert out to Clear Hill where they had lunch and were going to camp there. Ernie decided to go off for a walk out to the end of Narrow Neck. Ernie scouted round and pushed the route to scramble down the rock face alone. Realising that he had reached

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the ridge below, he returned to camp. Next day they descended to Carlons - Kedumba Creek - Katoomba. (Ernie was unsure whether this was a normal or holiday weekend).

On a late March 1933 trip to the Gloucester area Ernie & Jean, Richard Croker, Evelyn Higginbotham and Mouldy Harrison created much amusement appearing in public dressed in shorts and shirts. It was probably this trip that Mouldy showed Ernie an orchid which he took home to grow. This developed into an interesting hobby and eventuated with the orchids paying for his first car and later a world trip. Austen Steeps above the lower Kowmung were named after him.

When the Head of the River Regatta was run Ernie and Jean used to throw a party for bushwalkers (photo from 1931) at their home. Ernie was also known for a good singing voice.

In the mid 1930s Ernie and Tom Herbert became Beach Inspectors for between Garie and Stanwell Park. However in 1937 the club wrote to the Bulli Shire Council saying that due to increasing numbers of people, other than bushwalkers, now using the beaches that the control of such beaches was beyond the scope of the club.

Ernie recalled that he once saved Jack Debert's life. Ernie, Jack and Frank Duncan were well out waiting to catch a wave off Era. Ernie had a look and they were about 150m out from the shore and caught a current towards the southern end of the beach. Both Jack and Frank, being English, were not very good swimmers. Ernie said "you'd better start coming in". He was making pretty good headway against the current when he heard Jack cry out "Ernie don't leave us. Don't leave us".

So Ernie turned round to where Jack was struggling. He told Frank not to swim against the current, to take his time and swim

towards the northern end of the beach then head into shore. Ernie then approached Jack, making sure that he didn't get too close, and talked him into taking gentle strokes up the coast and managed to get him back to shore.

During the mid 1930s Gordon Smith used Ernie and other members of the Sydney Bush Walkers as pacers for his walking feats.

Frank and Anice Duncan were vegetarians and there was much banter between the Vegos and the Carnivores (led by Ernie). Frank Duncan died at the age of 93 in May 1994. Ernest Elliott Austen (1891-1985) died in his 94th year - proving that meat eaters live longer!

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of Ernie's walking career:

1920 the second fastest in the Australian 1 mile championship

1922 the second fastest in the Australian 3 mile championship

1923 won the Australian 7 mile championship 55:44

1924 won the Australian 1 mile championship 6:45

1924 won the Australian 3 mile championship 22:13

1927 won the Australian 1 mile championship 6:52

His best times were:

1924 1 mile 6:40.5

1923 2 miles 14:09

1924 3 miles 22:13

1923 7 miles 55:44.6

Ernie won the State One-hour Championship in 1922 covering 12.3km. Eleven years later (aged 42) he won the Seven Mile (11.3km) Australasian Individual Championship in 55:44.2 (or 12.1km/hour).

SOURCES:

Austen, E (1984), taped interview

Waddell, Peter (19??), *Race Walking in Australia, an 80 year history*.

The Walker (1933), NSW Ainateur Walking Club

Clio is the nom de plume of a long time contributor to *the Sydney Bushwalker*. It is not known if a connection exists between Clio the writer and Clio the magazine. Editor.

FOOTNOTES by Patrick James

The 71st Annual Reunion is on the weekend of 31 October-1 November at Coolana. By design and according to an ancient druid ritual the reunion is held on *the weekend before the first full moon, after the long weekend in October*. Members active, inactive, non-active, honorary and prospective, their spouses, partners, children and parents (as the case may be) are invited, charged, perhaps even commanded to attend. There is/are oodles of room to camp in the park-like beauty of Coolana. Gallons of water fit to drink. Heactares of bush through which to walk. Details of the Reunion program will be published next month. The usual program of events is to arrive on the Saturday at about morning tea time, meet, walk and talk till dinner time, happy hour starts sometime after afternoon tea and finishes sometime around dinner time. *When the sun goes down and the tide goes out, people gather round* and the entertainment begins. See the president become invested by being decked with the bones, enjoy campfire entertainment, feast on early Christmas cake, spinach pie, Greek coffee and/or hot Milo.

A belated, but happy birthday to the equine community who collectively celebrated their birthday last month. A happy independence day to New Guinea and Malta this month. (Who decides who has which day as a national day?) I note this month the Spring Equinox when the days get longer or shorter, or the nights colder or warmer or both, I'm not sure. I do know I make a mistake last time when I mentioned the winter whatever.

No further sightings of Elvis have been reported. He could be staying in Frog Hollow.

A new billy has been developed made of plastic; importantly besides being non-stick, it neither rusts or contaminates food with aluminium, excess of which is thought to be detrimental to one's health.

WALKS SECRETARIAT

The Winter Walks Program is out and it is time to start constructing the Spring Walks Program. (Like painting the Harbour Bridge, the walks program never stops.) You can send in walks by mail to the Club, or by fax, or come into the Clubrooms. **Bill Capon, Walks Secretary.**

telephone: 02 9398 7820, fax: 02 9314 5791

Coolana (Monday 5th October - Sunday 11th October) Join Gemma Gagne for the week or just a day or two. There will be working bees and walks in the valley.

Coolana (Tuesday 13th October - Friday 16th October) Frances and Bill Holland would like company for all or some of the days. Easy walks perhaps stretching out a little for those who feel energetic. Otherwise, bird watching, relaxing and happy times each evening.

Wombean Caves (Tuesday 10th November - Thursday 12th November) This commences with a bus tour from Mittagong to Old Joadja historical township then on to Wombean Caves where we have reserved accommodation (or camping). The next two days will include walking and optional cave tours. Contact Bill Holland for early booking.

CLAYTONS WEEKEND WALK at KANANGRA. Weekend walk on 7 and 8 Nov. 1998, of two Kanangra day walks: Day 1, 13 Km Craft Walls area, and Day 2, 9 Km in the Cottage Rock area. Limit 16, with accommodation in comfortable on-site vans at Oberon. Early expression of interest for this tentfree weekend walk would be appreciated. Contact the leader, Don Brooks on 9807 1657 before 9.30 PM.