



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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December 1998

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Le GRANDE RANDONNEE

by Peter Rossel.

Here Peter retraces his steps of September 1997.

Arrived in Belfort by train from Paris having previously walked a section of the GR-10 in the Pyrenes from Hendaye to St. Jean- Pied de Port as described in an earlier issue of the Sydney Bushwalker. The ancient citadel city would be my starting point for a walk along the GR-5 in northerly direction towards Strassbourg

The GR-5 is a walking track-approx.2300 km. long that stretches from the Dutch North-Sea coast to the Mediterranean via Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Alsac-Lorraine and the Swiss Alps to end on the beach in Nice. The mostly single-file track is often poorly marked and at times difficult to find. Intersections can cause confusion and loss of time. On the positive side the track leads through remote and the most beautiful parts of the countryside.

It was the Vosges and Alsac-Lorraine section that attracted me. The area is unique in many ways. It offers mountains-forests-vineyards and colourful ancient villages. The Alsatian people are considered the most "un-french" in France. This should not come as a surprise, considering their historical background. The region has been invaded from the east on numerous occasions from as far back as 50BC. till the 2nd. W.W.

The Vosges is a mountain range -approx. 50km.wide by 170km. long-running parallel to the Rhine. The highest points are Ballon d'Alsace (1275m) and Grand Ballon (1425m). There are further numerous tops around the 1000m. Belfort is about 15km from the village of Gyromany where I intended to join the GR-5.

It was noon and fairly warm when I walked out of le gare de Belfort to inquire about a bus service to Gyromany. I was informed

there was no bus service on Sunday. Not to worry the walk would do me good. En passant I spoke to others and was advised a limited service was available on Sundays. With some apprehension I waited at the busstop and indeed a bus eventually arrived. Driver and passengers were a friendly bunch and took great interest in my origin and future plans. Several unscheduled stops were made to allow passengers to attend to private affairs such as a last minute visit to the baker.

In Gyromany the driver took me on a brief sightseeing tour before dropping me off at the gite d'etappe (low cost accommodation for walkers). The holiday season had ended and the place was closed. After some inquiries I was informed that the local chemist was the custodian of the key, but unfortunately he was out for the day. No problem - I pitched the outer of my Microlite at a camping spot near the river where I shared a drink with some "Hells Angels" who were about to roar off.

The following morning started with an early visit to the local self service which was not yet open for business but allowed me to shop providing I left the money at the till. This gesture of good will was much appreciated and I was on my way by 7am. to Ballon Alsac. There I would descend to col des Perches (1075m) and turn off to Rouge Gazon at the end of the my first day.

The narrow track climbed steadily through a lovely forest of shady beech and pine trees with occasional grand views towards far away Germany and the Alps. The weather was fine and sunny. At about lunchtime I reached the top which offered great views all around. Here I encountered the first person since leaving Gyromany, a German walker on his way to Italy. We shared some notes and food before departing in opposite directions. At the col I branched off across alpine meadows to the small deserted ski resort of Rouge Gazon. At the one and only

hotel I was received with great hospitality being the only guest. Rouge Gazon had been the scene of bitter fighting during WW1- hence the name "Red Meadow".

A generous dinner was served too much even for a hungry walker. Breakfast was of similar proportions and I hastily packed most of it for *en route*. This encouraged the waitress to bring more fruit and cakes till I had to call it a halt - explaining I had to carry it all half way to Thann- my day's objective.

It was another fine and sunny day. The track passed again through shady forests and a number of "ballons", were negotiated.. Lunched on the track with some Dutch walkers on their way to the Swiss Alps. They kindly helped to lighten my pack by eating most of the goodies- ex Rouge Gazon.

The last hill was Berlacken Kopf (1042 metres). From there it was down through the forest all the way to Thann. Lost my way on a few occasions and had to retrace my steps. The descent was rather painful on my toes- a legacy from my walk in the Pyrenes. I was glad when the road to Thann was reached at about 4pm. Thann was only 5km. away but a lift offered by a Berlin couple was gratefully accepted. They were not satisfied till I had been dropped off in front of l'office d'Initiative (tourist bureau) in central Thann. Obtained the address of the gite d'Etappe which turned out to be a super modern establishment (type of youth hostel) the best I had ever seen in France. The place was brand new, even the doors had coded security locks. I was the only guest but later our number swelled to three. Cost p.p.p.n.- 52Fr.!

Thann, situated along the *Route du Vin*, is a charming ancient town, well known for its wine, typical architecture and famous cathedral spire. The river Thur flows through the town adding additional charm. Like every where in the region the ancient houses are of semi brick and timber construction

with plenty of colourful flowerboxes on the window sills style à la Black Forest. The market square displays lots of flowers and fountains with mythical sculptures. In these surroundings it was a pleasure to relax on a terrace and enjoy a typical Alsatian dinner.

The following morning I was on my way again at 7 AM. to Le Grand Ballon (1425m) with the intention to stay overnight at a farm auberge near col du Haage (1230m). It promised to be a long day with ETA at col du Haage 7 PM. Luckily the weather was fine and it was a pleasure to stride along the gradually climbing track crossing a number of tops towards col Amic (825m). I detoured briefly to Hartmannswiller Kopf (950m), or as the French call it *le Vieil Armand*, the scene of fierce fighting during WW1. Thousands of soldiers lost their lives here in the now so tranquil forestry region- a thought I found hard to comprehend. The serene cemetery holds the remains of 10,000 to 12,000 unknown soldiers.

Le Grand Ballon was reached at about 4pm. The views were magnificent. It is said that on a clear day one can see the Mont Blanc. I did not have that pleasure but was more than satisfied with the panorama. Had a look at the monument of *des Diable Bleu* (Bleu Devils)- an elite mountaineering and ski corps that fought and died in the area during WW1.

My destination was still a good two hours away and the track steep and tricky. Care was required as I was getting rather tired and looking forward to a refreshing drink. Was pleased when the farm finally came into view at about 7.30pm. The farm had a small inn attached where I flopped on a bench and looked back with some satisfaction towards Le Grand Ballon whilst nursing a cold beer

Above the cowshed was a small dormitory which I shared with two German walkers on their way to Thann. We had a simple but excellent dinner which lasted much longer

then was anticipated, perhaps the good local wine played a part.

The next day was bright and sunny. Had about 7 hours walking ahead before I would reach the ancient village of Mittlach (530m). The highest tops to cross would be *col du Herrenberg* and *col du Hahnenbrunnen*, both about 1190m. Lost my way in the forest a couple of times but a squad of young French soldiers *en patrouille* assured me I was *en route*. The small ski resort of Markstein (1200m) was reached at lunch time. Hardly anybody there so I pushed on over the tops and reached Mittlach in the late afternoon. The village dates back to 1400 when settled by Tyrolean woodcutters. The local inn offered good, reasonably priced accommodation and due to the well patronised bar it was late before I hit the sack.

Time had slipped away since leaving Belfort. It was now Friday 26 September and I was due for some R&R in Colmar.

It was already warm when I left the following morning for the nearby village of Mitzeral, about half an hour's walk away, where I would catch the train to Colmar. The train was not due till 1pm. I decided to beat the train and walk to the next stop, the small ancient town of Munster, about an hour's walk further down the line past vineyards and pretty farms.

Saw the first stork nests, on top of high poles with a wagon wheel, which forms the basis for their nest. Storks play a significant role in the Alsatian folklore and have been adopted as the regional symbol. These large birds migrate annually from Africa to breed here during the summer but their numbers are dwindling due to human encroachment on their habitat.

After a pleasant interlude at Munster I finally boarded the train for Colmar where I soon obtained a B&B place (*chambre d'hôte*).

Colmar is a beautiful, medieval city-built in the traditional German-Alsatian style. There is plenty to see in this historical place and numerous small affordable restaurants offer excellent Alsatian cuisine.

After a two day stopover, I returned to the GR-5 with first objective the ancient picturesque village of Riquewihr. The village, set amongst the vineyards, dates back to the 13th. Century, the majority however is of 16th. century vintage, but what is a few centuries amongst friends?

This rather touristy place offers plenty of opportunity to sample the local product-Alsatian Riesling. I found the temptation hard to resist and consequently delayed my departure a bit.

Next came Ribeauville some 5 km away where I stayed for the night. Then on to Chatnois-about 20km. up or down the track depends how you look at it. Passed several ruined castles with commanding views over the Rhine valley below. The *gîte d'Etape*-as usual offered good accommodation. Chatenois is less touristy and has a nice mountain backdrop of the distant Vosges.

It was now 1st. Oct. and time to start planning my return to Holland which I had left on 8th. Sept. Decided to go by train to Strassbourg for a two day stop-over and subsequently by similar transport back to Holland. The train journey back was partially along the Rhine- a fitting salute to a great walk.

Last Minute Notice SBW

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Don't forget the SBW Christmas Party.

Bring a plate.

See the social program for details.

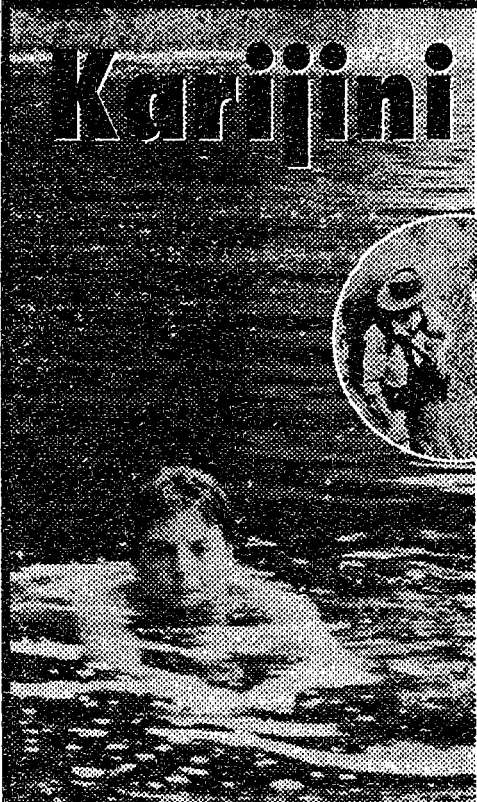
EDITORIAL. Christmas means different things to different people, from a splurge of retail spending to the meaning of life. Christmas is also a good time to say thanks to those many people who have made membership of SBW such a good thing.

So you went on one or two walks this year. Good. Better say thanks to the walks leaders for their time and effort. But you cannot stop there because your one or two walks were a drop in the bucket of all the walks that were put on during the year. So better say thanks to the Walks Secretary and his team of 1 who collected all the walks, put them in a logical order in the Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer walks programs. Sometimes walks don't come easily and some leaders need to be strongly invited to lead walks. That's Walks Secretariat business.

The Walks Programs aren't found under a cabbage leaf. Someone prints them, staples

them together and post them to you. These people deserve recognition. The same people also print, pack and post the Magazine. Thanks again for doing the Magazine. Is the Magazine valued by SBW? A leading question perhaps but this year 7000 copies and not one single complaint. The important thing about the Magazine is the contribution by its many authors. These people have toiled with pen and ink and their old school dictionary to write to entertain you. Thank you authors.

While all this is going on there's another group of people working quietly in the background moving the Club along; removing obstacles from in front, oiling the wheels and pushing from the back. Who are these good people because they deserve your thanks. They're the members of the Committee who do what you elected them to do, they manage the Club. And who are all these people? Mostly their names are on page one of the magazine. Merry Christmas from them to you.



Karijini National Park

Our two week Karijini expedition in June-July 1999 takes you deep into the Hamersley Ranges where deep, red-walled gorges hide magnificent pools and waterfalls.


This is spectacular walking country, about as far as you can get from Sydney and Melbourne and still be in Australia.

On this expedition, you do a series of relatively short walks culminating in an all-day lilo trip through Red and Joffre Gorges. Bring a camera and something to keep it dry and you'll get photos that will be the envy of many a professional photographer.

You also do a one week walk through the Munjina and Dales-Dignam gorge systems, finishing at Fortescue Falls, the largest in the park.

Space is limited. We won't offer this trip again until 2001 so get in soon if you want to take part.

Willis's Walkabouts
12 Carrington St Millner NT 0810
Email: walkabout@ais.net.au



Phone: (08) 8985 2134

Fax: (08) 8985 2355

Ho. Ho. Ho. Merry Christmas, Ho. Ho. Ho. Happy New Year.

by Alex Colley

The main management problem is overuse of the park, particularly in the vicinity of the Castle and in Hidden Valley, which are within the wilderness area. These over-used areas are badly damaged and polluted. One method of limiting this degradation would be to establish camping areas with toilets. This would be unacceptable in a wilderness area and it was considered preferable to ban camping in such areas. This would expose other sites to damage, but by rotating sites such areas would recover in time.

over-use occurs mainly in the vicinity of the Castle, camping there could be banned, but this would be difficult to enforce. The best solution, the sub-committee considered, would be to establish a camping ground, with facilities, supervised by a resident field officer, on Yadboro

Damage is also caused by over-use and dispersion of tracks. It therefore becomes necessary to maintain tracks in heavily used and sensitive areas and mark them with unobtrusive signs such as low pegs. Maintained tracks will be used by walkers in preference to other routes. It is regrettable that such measures are necessary in a wilderness area, but the alternative of a permit system was rejected by the sub-committee. Most of the wilderness terrain is not over used and such measures would not be necessary..

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THE KOKODA TRACK by Rosemary MacDougal

This is a story about 10 SBW members who walked the Kokoda Track (not Trail).

Some of us had relations who had fought there in WWII, some had not. Some spoke about the historic importance of the Kokoda campaign, some did not. Everyone seemed to have a mission in mind but not everyone discussed it. I perceived an air of determination and excitement for the challenge ahead of us.

Our research showed that the track was about 90 km long and that we would ascend about 18,000 feet* and descend about the same. It was recommended that the journey be undertaken from north to south.

Malaria, leeches, heat and rain were all to be expected. Rascals (local thieves) could be a problem at the end of the walk. When entering a village it would be desirable to seek out the head man and obtain permission to pass through and if staying to negotiate the tariff! Villagers would often offer fruit and vegetables (mostly for a small sum of kina).

River crossings would be plentiful, some would involve wading across a log or combination of logs and others would have to be waded. Mud was guaranteed.

We set off from Sydney on a warm winters morning in June with our packs and bags of food for 8 nights and 9 days. We were told that customs in PNG would wish to inspect our food parcels and that we should keep as much as possible in the original sealed containers.

Upon arrival and after inspection of the first bag it became obvious that we could simply list the food contents on the customs declaration and with a grunt from the customs official and a sweet smile from each of us we were allowed through.

The purchase of meths was our first objective. Our information was that such was

available at the pharmacy near our motel in Port Moresby to which we arrived at 3:10 PM. Upon asking for 10 litres of the addictive fluid we were told that we would need a licence and that as they were closing at 4:00 PM they couldn't help us. (We were leaving the next morning at 5:00 AM to fly to Popandetta to start the walk).

With some persistence, a local girl told us the pharmacy warehouse would have enough supplies and she cheerfully agreed to show us the way by catching the No 9 PMV (Public Motor Vehicle in the form of a beaten up Toyota Coaster which only stops when the driver feels like it or you can make yourself heard by shouting over the gabble of the locals inside and outside).

We established we would not need a license and successfully negotiated our purchases (we discovered we could have wandered into an adjoining hardware and acquired an unlimited supply). An ex pat offered us a lift back to our motel in the back of her ute and the locals couldn't resist showing their glee at a bunch of Aussies using the same method of transport that they did. There was much shouting and yelling at this phenomenon.

We started the walk the next day. Our packs were heavy and it was hot. At Kokoda we met some Rotarians who were working on building a clinic for TB screening next to the recently completed hospital for which they were responsible and rightly proud.

The day passed without significant incident other than setting off on the wrong track! Later, we negotiated with the assistant head person of the first village to set up camp on a patch of grass just right for 7 tents. The head man turned up and said we were on a cow paddock and that we would have to move back across the creek. We couldn't see any cows or evidence of same but who were we to argue?

The next day involved a climb of 800 metres. We had decided we should start each day by 7:00 AM to avoid the heat of the day. The first major village was Isurava. A plaque told

us that the village had been unsuccessfully defended by 1000 Australians and 30 Papuans. We bought bananas and mandarins and eagerly sought information about the village and its inhabitants.

We negotiated that night's accommodation at the site of the "old" village of Isurava to which the head man accompanied us at the same time showing us the track to the wreck of a Japanese fighter plane. The "old" village had been abandoned many years ago after an outbreak of typhoid and there were no structures remaining.

The next few days were filled with the rigorous routine of achieving our predetermined camping spot each day. There was much to see and history to absorb. Each village had so much to offer - a culture so different to ours and in many respects meaningful and seemingly less complicated. The Seventh Day Adventist Church has a strong influence and whilst I have no idea whether that is good or bad, I saw many people who seemed to be content with their way of life. They were hard working, healthy and prosperous.

On those parts of the track where significant battles had taken place I found myself standing quietly and trying to imagine how our soldiers fought for their lives and their country. The stupidity of Generals sitting in comfortable offices in Australia giving orders that were impossible to implement, was all too obvious. The madness of war and loss of life on both sides has had an ever lasting impact.

When we came to the village of Menari, about three quarters of the track had been completed. Light rain fell as we were putting our tents up and we sheltered under the guesthouse. We did not know what was about to beset us. Until then the track was easy to follow and the track notes reasonably accurate. We had been unable to get topo maps.

The next day (Day 7) we set off for Nauro. The school was at the end of the village and

as it was only 7:30 AM we called in and talked to the teachers. School did not start until 9:00 AM.

As usual the day started with an ascent and a descent, after which the track took us to a fast flowing and deep river where there should have been a log crossing. "Can you see the track on the other side?" "Does the track go down the river a bit?" "The track notes have got the river going the wrong way". "Which way was the last river flowing"? "This doesn't seem right - we'd better go back and see if there is a track off to the left".

By now you've all guessed what happened next! "We're on the wrong ridge - we should be on the one over there!" So back to the top of the hill we trudged where we ought to have seen views back to Menari or so the track notes said. Guess what! No views - back to the village, but lunch first.

Removal of boots at each break was a great relief and a chance to dry one's feet. At this time the owner of one foot sought advice as to why it was so red. The answer came "Oh that's foot rot. The only way to treat that is to have dry feet".

When we returned to the village, school stopped, and we were swamped with kids laughing and giggling at us. We were told we had gone the right way and there was no other ridge. The only solution to the problem was to hire a guide and within seconds such a person turned up complete with bush knife and rifle.

Off we set again up the hill and down the other side. The guide agreed that another track had been made so as to cross the river up stream because the bridge referred to in the track notes had been washed away. The new track was not obvious and without topo maps we would never have found Nauro. When we eventually got there we'd been walking 11½ hours and foot rot and other rot had severely attacked a number of our members.

From Nauro we had 1½ days to go and we decided that we needed a guide and one porter to see us through. At 6:30 AM the next morning a guide (aged 14) and a porter (aged 12) turned up bright and cheery and ready to lead us out.

We completed the journey on time but Aussie Bob who was supposed to pick us up at Owers Corner did not turn up. The strongest and fittest of the team together with the guide walked a further 6 km to a Salvation Army depot and again you've guessed it. Thank God for the Salvos - they turned up in their truck just before dusk and transported us to Aussie Bob's motel where we were booked for the night.

Aussie Bob offered us no explanation but we were so relieved at not having to make an evening meal from our left overs that we made no comment. We had a roof over our head which we shared with cockroaches and silverfish. Our meal which we had been told would be fresh barramundi and chips was, we reckoned, barramundi fish fingers stuck together with batter.

There are a lot of things I've left out with which my fellow travellers will be able to regale you. Thank you Colin, Edith, Kenn, Marella, Margaret, Michele, Morrie, Owen and Ted, for a wonderful trip. Your great sense of fun, determination, camaraderie and stoicism is something I will always treasure and ensure that this trip will never be forgotten.

Where Kokoda Track PNG
When 3 - 14 June 1998
Present Colin Atkinson, Edith Baker, Kenn Clacher, Marella Hogan, Ted Kelly, Owen Kimberley, Rosemary MacDougal, Michele Powell, Margaret Sheens and Morrie Ward.
 * ca 5485 metres

General Meeting October 1998

by Barry Wallace

At around 2005 the President, as chairman, called the 16 or so members present to order and began the meeting. There were apologies for Bill and Fran Holland, Wilf Hilder, and Patrick and Greta James. New members Winnie Wu, Richard Phillipps and Michael O'Brien were welcomed to the club with badge, constitution and membership list.

The minutes of the September meeting were read and received with no business arising.

Correspondence was comprised only of outgoing letters to new members and accounts for payment.

The treasurer's report was next, indicating that we began with \$14,181, received income of \$1,135, spent \$3,634 and closed with a balance of \$11,715.

The walks reports began with compulsory visual relevance, with "The Map" prominently displayed in a dark alcove. Alan Wells' walk in the Wollangambe, scheduled for 12, 13 September was having none of it. It was cancelled. David West's Saturday cycle tour de Homebush went with visitors and the leader only. Tony Crichton had the three starters on his Saturday walk from Victoria Falls out for Cappuccino by 1400 in wet conditions. Eddy Giacomel had 12 on his trip to Tootie Creek in good weather surveying the results of recent fire and flood in the area. The 11 starters on David Robinson's Sunday walk from Bundeena to Otford were treated to views of whales and a sea eagle along the way.

Ian Rennard's mid week walk went despite some transport problems for the party of eight.

The weekend of 18, 19, 20 September was not good for weekend walks, though whether this was due to the presence of the Confederation Bush Dance on the same weekend in uncertain. Whatever the reason both Jan Pieters and Maurice Smith cancelled

scheduled walks due to lack of starters. The K to K went that Saturday, under the baton of Phil Newman. There were 10 starters and 9 finishers on what was described as a great walk. Frank Sander led 13 decreasing to 12 on his Sunday walk from Roseville Station to Gordon Station, and described it as a good walk. There was no report for Bill Hope's programmed Sunday walk out from Carlons' Farm.

The midweek walk that week was conducted by Bill Holland, with an entourage of six reporting warm conditions and wildflowers.

Bill Capon's flexible October school holidays trip/trips in the Buddawangs/Wolgan area(s) went, with five starters.

The weekend of 25, 26, 27 September saw Tony Manes and a party of 15 out from Mount Talaterang in good weather. They reported somewhat overgrown conditions with the rough going here and there compensated by good views along the way. Bill Holland led a party of 13 on his visit to farms at Georges Plains. You may have read the article in last month's magazine. Ron Watters reported nine on his Saturday walk to Russells Needle and Jim Calloway had five starters in glorious but somewhat hot weather on his walk from Engadine to Waterfall on the Sunday. Sunday also saw the 18 walkers on Lucy Moore's walk in the Mount Wilson area out by 1430 for some reason.

October 2, 3, 4, 5 was the long weekend, with Ian Rennard leading a party of 10 on his walk in Morton National Park on what was described as a beautiful weekend. Jim Rivers cancelled his walk from Porters Creek Dam. Maurice Smith's test walk from Quiera Clearing also enjoyed perfect weather but turned into somewhat of an adventure, with the party walking for 17 hours on the Monday. The presence of one sprained ankle may have had something to do with that. Eddy Giacomel reported a party of eight on his part exploratory Wollemi National Park walk. Ken Cheng had 12 on

his Brisbane Waters area walk and reported sightings of wildflowers and wildlife along the way.

Tony Manes had 10 starters on his walk from Loombah Plateau over the weekend of 9, 10, 11 October. Conditions were wet on the Saturday, with persistent drizzle, but Sunday turned on fine weather. The other item of remark was the extensive pig sign throughout the area. Wilf Hilder postponed Stages 3 and 4 of his Great Illawarra Coastal Walk the same weekend. Allan Donnelly led the party of six on his Saturday test walk out from Carlons Farm through rain, hail, and generally challenging conditions. There was no report for Roger Treagus' Sunday walk from Gordon to Narrabeen Beach although it did end the walks reports for this month.

Bill Holland was away, so we skipped the conservation report.

Confederation report told of the release of the draft plan of management for Morton National Park. It appears that camping under rock ledges will be prohibited in an attempt to preserve certain rare ferns, which are being adversely affected by the practise. Other details are expected to follow. Watch this space. In general, NPWS prefer to control bushfires in park areas using their own resources in order to minimise collateral damage. The upshot of this is that other park areas will sometimes need to be closed to public access to release personnel for this duty. Extensions to existing firetrails during fire control by others are of particular concern.

There was no general business, but announcements indicated that this year for the first time the Tasmanian Park Service will introduce permit only access to World Heritage areas of their National Parks. The meeting closed at 2148 hours after announcements.

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ISDELL RIVER by Bill Holland

Details are now available for this three week trip to the Isdell River region in the West Kimberley - a spectacular part of Australia. We will be visiting the middle and lower sections of the Isdell River (east of Broome) in the last three weeks of May 1999. This is one of the most beautiful walking areas in Australia.

Russell Willis has supplied us with the following description of the walk.

"We begin with a flight from Kununurra to the Silent Grove airstrip, then a drive to the Bell Gorge car park where we begin our walk. A short walk of about one km brings us to Bell Falls then down into a gorge to camp on a nice beach next to large pool.

During the next few days we find:

- many beautiful rapids,
- waterfalls and pools,
- a variety of Aboriginal art sites,
- closed forest, open woodland and a variety of landscapes and wildflowers, and
- good fishing for those who bring a handline or collapsible rod.

Eventually we reach the plains and an easy walk along a long ridge to another creek system and yet another nice waterfall. Then comes something rare, open grassland, not speargrass but the kind of grass that would have delighted an early pastoralist before overgrazing destroyed it. We walk through an almost closed canopy forest listening to birds. With time on our side, it is a place to linger and enjoy.

After a stop at yet another lovely pool and rapids, we head to another creek system which soon turns into something special, a beautiful series of pools and falls followed by a deep and spectacular gorge. By the end of the sixth or seventh day we should reach the largest river in the region, the Isdell. We follow the Isdell down to our food drop an unnamed tributary known locally as Verdant Valley. If time permits, we will do a side trip

to Reva Falls which, from the air, appears to be the largest and most spectacular waterfall in the region.

Our helicopter food drop comes in on the morning of day 11. Those who wish to do so will have the opportunity to do a scenic flight at this time.

The next stretch along the Isdell itself is generally fairly easy going with some interesting rolling rock forms along the way. A walk of about a day brings us to the first of what are called the Twin Creeks. Magnificent! We spend a full day relaxing and ambling around enjoying the scenery,

Below the Twin Creeks, the Isdell drops into the lower gorge. We'll follow this down as far as time permits, probably camping two nights at the furthest point we reached on our first trip and doing a day walk down the river to places we have never seen before. From this point, we walk up another small creek which we follow to its headwaters. This should be a short cut back to the upper reaches of the Twin Creek.

And be prepared for another wonderful valley. Sandy camp sites, Aboriginal art, easy walking, nice monsoon forest. Our first two trips here were great. This branch brings us almost back to the southern Twin Creek. From here to Barker River and back to Mt. Hart Station."

This will be a custom designed walk by Willis Walkabouts for the Sydney Bush Walkers and it may be possible to link with other Willis walks. In order to obtain best pricing we would like to receive early expressions of interest. For more information please contact Frances or Bill Holland on 9484 6636.

SBW TIGERS PROWL TO WOMBEYAN CAVES by John Poleson

On Tuesday 10th November the ruthless and toothless retired SBW tigers together with assorted others assembled at the Mittagong Visitors Centre for a three day tiger assault on Wombeyan Caves. We were twelve bold souls in all, led by a hard and ruthless leader.

The road to Wombeyan was rugged to say the least but the views were fantastic. We arrived at the caves in time for lunch. Setting up camp was not too difficult as Bill had booked two eight bed dormitories. After the usual all-in brawl to obtain the best beds, we settled down to lunch on the lawn outside the camp kitchen. The weather was perfect and we spared a thought or two for the poor sods who had to work while we fed the Satin Bower birds and made plans for the afternoon activities.

Following a decadent long lunch we set off on a walk to Mares Creek Canyon stopping off to inspect the self guided Tinted cave. This was a small interesting grotto that opened onto a daylight ledge overlooking the Mares Creek Gorge. We spent half an hour or so discussing the geology of Wombeyan Marble together with the relative merits of stalactites, stalagmites, fossils and ancient coral reefs.

After an absolutely exhausting jaunt we returned to the camp kitchen lawn for Happy Hour. From then on the evening went steadily down hill as the combination of wine, good food and jokes took its toll. After dark we all walked down to the spectacular Victoria Arch where the caves superintendent had kindly turned the flood lights on for us. The eerie shadows and grotesque shapes created a wonderful ambience. We retired to our beds after a few songs and more jokes.

Next morning was spent on the self-guided tour of the Fig Tree Cave. This involved exploring the cave at our own pace guided by instructive and informative tapes located at strategic points.

After another long lunch we all went on a guided tour of the Wollondilly Cave, the longest in the system. The guide was excellent and we were all impressed by the minimalist standard of cave development at Wombeyan. Unlike the tourist caves at Jenolan only a small amount of concrete has been used and the caves still have a primitive feel about them. There are steel ladders and narrow twisty passages that give the impression of a real speleological expedition.

After the tour some of us returned to the dormitory for an afternoon nap, while Bill led a walk to the Waterfall. This was again followed by happy hour and long dinner. After dinner we were visited by the Cave Superintendent, Michael Chalker, who had a few wines with the group and told us all about the area.

Next morning was an early rise for us all. We had to be at Mittagong at 10 AM to board a tourist bus for a guided tour of the Ghost Town, Joadja. The road was awash and we soon encountered trouble with a fallen tree and a couple of semi-trailers. This was soon sorted out and our convoy proceeded to Mittagong to join the tour.

Joadja proved to be full of interesting and delightful historical artifacts. Its a great pity that more money is not available for historic restoration as it is really an undiscovered and neglected treasure. We concluded the day with a tour of Berrima Court House.

Thanks Bill and Fran for a wonderful, carefully planned midweek expedition. The great company included Lorraine Bloomfield, Wilf Hilder, Brian Holden, Bill Holland, Fran Holland, George Mawer, Dick Pike (visitor), Marion Plaude, Robyn Plumb, John Poleson, Lyn Poleson and Gretel Woodward.

Walls Pass in November

by Greta James

There were five of us on Allan Donnelly's Walls Pass medium day walk - Allan, John MacDonald, John's visitor Sheila Zaman, Susie Fielding and myself and we set off down the Golden stairs off the start of Narrow Neck a little after 8 AM on a delightful Saturday morning. The meander to the base of Ruined Castle was pleasant although a number of fallen trees formed minor obstacles and some of them I hugged rather firmly edging myself over.

We proceeded to the top of Ruined Castle where we had morning tea accompanied by a couple of Currawongs who seemed to be convinced that they had a greater right to our food than us. And they were pretty aggressive in attempting to claim their due. However, we fended them off and proceeded down a very steep slope into Cedar Creek which we heard flowing when we were still quite some distance above it. (And I do mean *above*, the slope was seriously steep, but not too slippery, thankfully.)

After refilling water bottles in Cedar Creek, we climbed the opposite bank. Allan had assured us the ascent to Walls Pass was very steep, steep, very steep and then very, very steep. I'm not sure where in this scenario we stopped for lunch but it was a delighted, flattish, grassy area. The Currawongs left us alone this time but the mosquitos were very attentive as well as the odd leech or two. But liberal lashings of Rid deterred the pests.

Up and at the hill again and, after crossing a delightful mini swamp, we found the "very, very steep" section which took us to Cedar Head. The next section included a couple of scrambles for which I was very grateful of the assistance of a rope and advice. I had been down Wall's Pass before and had no recollection of these sections but, then, it had been over ten years ago. Progress was slow with occasional exposure to add to the scrambles but the views over to

Burraborang, Ruined Castle and Mount Solitary were magnificent.

Finally we got to the base of the pass and Allan shimmied up the chain, put there by Wilf Hilder years ago, in fine fashion including some very graceful side stepping at the rather awkward start. When my turn arrived, only John and I remained and John gallantly offered me his knee to provide a "leg up". Being belayed certainly was helpful and I finally reached the top after lots of encouragement from the party. When John rejoined the party, we proceeded up the gully to which my legs complained, but then they're inclined to do that.

The next section involved a beautiful walk along the top of the plateau to the fire tower. We had been admiring the wild flowers for much of the day but on the plateau there was a great variety including quite a few waratahs. I had thought that they would have been finished by now but these ones were in full bloom. We took a short break at the fire tower and then completed the remaining 90 minute trudge along the Narrow Neck road distracted by the cliff and valley views and reached the cars at about 7 PM.

Thus endeth a magnificent day. Great views, lots of wild flowers, the odd adrenalin surge and good company. Thanks Allan!

FOOTNOTES by Patrick James

Its now the silly season of Christmas and New Year. So drive carefully, remember the most dangerous part of a bushwalk is the trip there and the trip back home.

In a burst of nostalgia and tradition the Committee has decided to move the Annual SBW Reunion back to its original position of the weekend after the Annual General Meeting. This decision was influenced greatly by the beautiful condition of Coolana. Lush grass, shady trees and cool clean water for swimming. More details will follow.