

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER.

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to the Sydney  
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CONTENTS.

	Page
Editorial - A National Tragedy	1
At Our November Meeting	3
Social Notes for January	4
Christmas Party	5
Letters to the Editor	6
Era for the Bushwalkers? By "Diogenes"	7
The Lower Income Group, by "Penniless Peter"	9
"Le Roi Est Mort, Vive Le Roi" (Paddy's Ad.)	11

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EDITORIAL.

A National Tragedy.

The prophecies made at the beginning of November that we were beginning the worst bushfire danger period in years have become startlingly true. For the first time since 1947 there have been no heavy spring rains and the heavy growth of the past bountiful years is tinder dry. Kuringai Chase and the Blue Mountains, both dear to bushwalkers, were merely waiting a spark to explode them. The spark came in the Chase on Thursday the sixteenth, and in little more than two hours swept from Mt. Kuringai until it burnt down, but not out, at the water at Bobbin Head. On the following Sunday a change of wind to the northeast sent the fire roaring back on a new course to come within yards of Mt. Colah, leaving a trail of bare and blackened hillsides in a strip five miles wide.

Similar fires have swept National Park and the Mountains with great loss of property. In the great State forests of the North Coast, in the Pilliga and in the open grasslands of the west, immense and appalling damage has been done to forests, stock and station property. The losses are doubly appalling in that not only the immediate property owners face great hardship but the community in general are deprived of the much needed timber and food. We will also suffer directly for years from the great depreciation of property caused by the destruction of fences and the consequent and inevitable rabbit infestation which will follow.

Can anything be done to minimise the chances of such large and devastating fires occurring? The most oppressive factor in the consideration of the problem is the climate. Ours is a "Mediterranean" climate, that is, one in which the greatest rainfall is in the autumn and winter months. Thus when the other conditions are most serious, the return of hot dry westerlies and north-westerlies, the vegetation is more or less dehydrated with no chance of a good soaking until March or April; the hottest part of the year coinciding with the driest with disastrous consequences.

Any fire-fighting and detection plans always have this grim sword over their heads. Burning and ploughing of firebreaks, scrupulous care, the total prohibition of firebreaks and dire penalties are at the best only palliatives. The immensity and ferocity of a large wind-fanned fire makes even the most gallant and superhuman effort seem puny. Sparks and burning bark will carry for miles on a strong wind to burst into life as soon as they touch - highways, firebreaks, men with sprays are then futile. It is a disheartening sight to watch a fire burn steadily through mile after mile of bushland knowing that little or nothing can be done.

Criticism is often levelled at official sources that no action is taken until property is actually menaced. Unfortunately very little can be done, especially in the much-gullied country around Sydney, until fires advance to the limit of fire hoses. The clearing of breaks and the often counselled "burning back" can only be safely done when adequate water is at hand to dampen the trailing edges. Without water you are merely advancing the moment of greatest danger, and to attempt to fight the advancing front of a really large fire is practically suicide. So regrettably the bush burns and a last stand is called at the limit of effectiveness, usually the outermost house or some substantial clearing.

Like Liberty, the price of freedom from fires is eternal vigilance. We who are probably the most interested in the protection of the bush must be the most vigilant. During the coming month the greatest care and caution is necessary. There are still parts of the Chase and National Park unburnt which makes them all the more precious. Let us hope that they survive the summer.

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AT OUR NOVEMBER MEETING.

By "Luke Hansard".

The President fitted himself behind the Bone at 8.10 p.m. and called on four candidates for flannel flowers: Betty Swain, Dick Pier, Ruth Petzel and Jane Putt.

Minutes were read to about 70 members, who found more "matters arising" than for a long time. It was learned that Myles had not yet replied to our requested leadership of an assault on the Blue Mountains City Council. Brushing this aside members descended upon The Great Era Question. The Secretary gave his judgment on the spirit of the trust deed which was that no heresy was being committed in our offer of the land to the State. After much hurling of trusts, trust deeds and trustees in the air it was decided to request a definite reply to our offer made in April. Mouldy gave inside information about a possible division "fairly soon" - "due east of Governor Game Lookout and south of watershed of Thelma Ridge to be added to Garrawarra". Bill Cosgrove's opinion was that we were wasting our time, for the Government had no intention of division and he counselled us to abandon the Government. An amendment, or codicil, was added to the April motion suggesting the proposed division, a rider was added to the codicil to make a pro rata discount on our offer, and a further amendment placing a time limit on motion, codicil and rider. All carried.

Before we rushed on to correspondence Betty Price arrived to be welcomed officially.

First piece of correspondence was a request for instructions on Era re-imburement from the Honorary Solicitor.

Start of the battle for Blue Mountains resumptions was heralded; Allan Strom had been moved to put pen to paper over Dormie's motion that the Chief Secretary be congratulated for his protection of flora and fauna. Mr. Evatt's wisdom was not nearly as shining as Dormie would have us believe, according to Allan. Someone promptly moved that Allan be requested to enlighten us further on the case of "Evatt v. The Kangaroos".

Next came a letter from Jim Hooper, requesting protection from editorial attacks and also requesting a club ruling, if any existed, on "blank" walks. The President stated that there was no ruling on the subject. A vote of confidence in the Walks Secretary was then moved and in the absence of any debate the question was put and carried, with a large number abstaining. Debate then ensued on whether views expressed in editorials were to be taken as official or unofficial, a further point raised in Jim Hooper's letter. Brian Harvey moved that the Editor be requested to publish a footnote to the effect that views expressed were not necessarily official. Kevin Ardill rose with the motion "that the Editor refrain from comment on matters which could more equitably be discussed at a general meeting". After the mover had spoken for some time the Editor applied for an adjournment of the debate until the next meeting in order that he may produce various evidence and prepare a case for the defence. Application granted.

4.

The storm having passed temporarily the meeting settled down to routine reports from the Social Secretary and the Treasurer. Paul Barnes requested volunteers for fire-watchers for National Park during the coming bush-fire danger period. A direction on lighting fires on officially fire-less weekends was requested by Gil Webb. The only suggestions made were to take only vegetarians or light un-official fires. (Un-official suggestion only.)

Alex Colley was re-elected Vice President. The Secretary reported progress on codification of the By-Laws but requested that the committee be allowed to decide on vague or overlapping by-laws.

The filling in of two vacancies on the Walks Programme was announced; Allan Hardie would be conducting a tour of Jenolan Caves on the Anniversary Weekend.

With the meeting audibly dying, Gil Webb announced a new series of theatre parties, then the meeting was quietly interned at 10.05.

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SOCIAL NOTES FOR JANUARY.

On the 18th January there will NOT be a Free Night. Instead we will be entertained by Suzanne Reichhardt, who is well known to the older members. Suzanne has recently returned from America and would like to show us some coloured slides as well as sing negro spirituals with guitar accompaniment.

- Ed. Stretton.

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BIRTHS - (alphabetically and chronologically).

GILROY - to Val and Arthur - a daughter, on November 9th.

HALL - to Ruby and Bill - a son, on November 20th.

All are reported to be doing well and the fairest and best yet sighted.

Watch this column for future announcements.

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The Twenty-first Annual Report of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement has been received. A summary of items of particular interest to bushwalkers will be published next month.

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S.B.W.

CHRISTMAS

PARTY

"THE CORONET"

319 GEORGE STREET

(Near Wynyard)

WEDNESDAY 12th DECEMBER

DANCING 8 PM to 1 AM

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TICKETS 12/6d

Edna Stretton

Reservations  
Arranged

Social Secretary

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

"Dear Sir,

In taking up arms for the Walks Secretary, I am not unmindful of the vote of confidence in him which was carried at the November General Meeting: I feel, however, since the original criticism of his work appeared in the magazine, it is only fitting that members who were absent from the general meeting should read something on his behalf.

The job of Walks Secretary is no sinecure, as evidenced by the succession of holders of that office over recent years. Strong men all, they "went into the fight like a lion, and came out like a lamb" - some of them after less than a year. The Club is lousy with jaded, haunted-looking, burned off ex-Walks Secretaries. No billet in the Club is more dependent on co-operation and whim of members, as I have found on a couple of occasions when deputising for Walks Secretaries on holidays.

However it seems past Walks Secretaries were lucky fellows, really. No one had told them it was their duty to provide three walks each week-end - no doubt because such a decision has never been made by any meeting. No one had suggested they should lead any vacant dates on the programme. Personally I should like to see this in operation, especially on week-ends with two "blanks". A split personality would be almost a pre-requisite for the Walks Secretary.

Also, these fortunate ex-Walks Secretaries, when no one else would hear their woes, could usually weep on the Editor's shoulders, to find some solace and encouragement in the subsequent issues of the magazine.

There was a time when I actually coveted that job. Now anyone can have it. Too much bodyline is being bowled.

Yours sincerely,  
Jim Brown."

.....

"Sir,

Your editorial in the November issue, and your dictum that the Walks Secretary should himself lead walks to fill vacant spaces on the Walks Programme gives rise to some interesting speculation. Why stop at the Walks Secretary?

Following your line of reasoning, if the Treasurer finds Club funds are not sufficient to meet commitments I presume he will be expected to dip into his own pocket to make good the deficiency. If the Social Programme is incomplete, it should be interesting to see the Social Secretary, under various disguises, providing entertainment for the assemblage.

These may be considered humorous suggestions, but, I'm sure, not more so than those contained in the November editorial.

Faithfully,  
Kevin Ardill."

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"Dear Editor,

I enclose herewith the manuscript of an article for the magazine, which I hope will meet with approval and be published. It was stated at the last meeting that the circulation had fallen because of lack of support for the editorial policy. I disagree. In my opinion people have not bought the magazine because of the lack of interesting articles written for publication by fellow members of late. This failure cannot be put down to your policy, because the previous editor was forced to say that if no further contributions were received the magazine would cease. This is merely a reflection on the falling number of really active members in the club, as shown by the unfilled walks programme, and the poorly attended walks on the programme. I for one anyhow, wish to help and I have therefore written this article which can (I hope) provoke some others.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,  
"Diogenes".

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ERA FOR THE BUSHWALKERS?

By "Diogenes".

There has been a great deal of argument in the club over the last few years on the subject of Era, and without wishing to unduly revive that old chestnut, I would like to make some comments on this Club's and others attitude towards that area.

Many of the newer members of the club must be puzzled at times by the amount of discussion that this subject can arouse. As a newer member I often wonder why this is so myself, and I think a few points need clearing up. Briefly the position appears to be that the club wants Era to be returned to its natural state and to become part of the adjoining area of Garrawarra. But is this possible or even advisable? Firstly, if the area was in a primitive state would it be as much use to the club or to the general population as it is now? If all the shacks on the area were removed, very little extra camping space would be gained because they are built on the hills. With no shacks there the Lifesaving bodies would be non-existent, and surfing would be vastly more risky than it is now, and people would be deterred from entering the area for "one day hikes". In addition the number of bushwalkers using the area now is very small. In fact for more than half the year none go there at all. It is as well to note that quite a number of people who own shacks use this area for weekend recreation all the year round, and I submit have an equal right to enjoy this area with any walker, because, after all, before the land was resumed they paid for the privilege, whereas campers went free.

It has been argued that the shacks are eyesores, and for this reason should be removed. I agree in part with this submission but I would point out that many of the later-built shacks are of quite good appearance and

8.

with more trees planted around them would be even better. This is borne out by the fact that some have been sold at high prices. New walkers visiting the area would be struck by the fact that in the area where walkers have camped for many years no shacks have been built, nor are any even visible from there.

Another argument used is that the shackowners destroy trees. As a person with a knowledge of the area I can say that this is incorrect. Indeed many trees have been planted around shacks in recent years.

Now that the land belongs to the Crown the problem of too many shacks being built there and forming a "shanty town" does not exist, and I would say that this eventuality would have been as disagreeable to the majority of owners as to walkers. It may be presumed, I think, that if the area is added to Garrawarra Park, the policy of those trustees towards the area of Burning Palms could be taken as a guide to what they would do in Era. But what is their policy? Does it meet with the approval of the club? Firstly they appear to favour the removal of the few tents (hidden) which were on that area when resumed, but instead of doing the proper thing and buying the owners out, they are trying to push them off by making the rent uneconomical. It jumped from 1/- per week to 5/- last year, and was almost made 10/-. Secondly they charge you a fee to camp there, which has never happened at North Era. Thirdly, they have refused to help the volunteer lifesavers in any way and have prevented them from building a small and attractive surf shed (at their own expense) and have even been so stupid as to suggest to the Surf Life Saving Association that they would pay one lifesaver for the weekends instead of the present volunteer patrols. Can you imagine this at holiday times when there are crowds in surfing? The policy of making the area primitive seems to have caused the marked decline in the number of people willing to patronise this area at weekends. Is this what the S.B.W. want at Era and North Era?

At the last monthly meeting of the club a motion was carried which if put into effect would mean that this club supports the present policy of the Garrawarra Trustees and is indeed committed to give the resumption money of £440 to the Government in exchange for one member on the Garrawarra Trust. I suggest that as this money was collected to buy part of North Era for camping and to prevent development there, now that the land has been resumed, the purpose of the purchase has been brought about, and that such money could be better used towards buying some other similar area for conservation purposes.

I do not wish to convey the impression that I am against the conservation ideals of the club, but I do believe in facing up to the realities of the present position and not in trying to put into effect in 1951 the policy which would have been possible in 1928, before the present development occurred. You cannot "unscramble" eggs and I hope that this article may help to bring the club's policy more up-to-date on this matter.

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION Current annual subscriptions will expire with your next magazine. Kindly complete and forward enclosed renewal form, together with cash, to the Business Manager, as soon as possible. Make cheques payable to "The Sydney Bushwalker Magazine A/c".



THE LOWER INCOME GROUP.

By "Penniless Peter".

About 5 years ago, our good friend Allan Hardie led the official King's Birthday week-end walk which started from Engadine and traced the Old Illawarra Road through almost to Appin and ended up by descending the Sublime Point track to Austinmer. (Train fare to Austinmer was at that time 4/10d. return, I think.) In his advance publicity, Allan pointed out that the walk was designed for the "Lower Income Group". In other words, Apprentices, students and others who were on junior wages. The name of the group caught on and, since that time, the term "Lower Income Group" has been applied to any walk which provides a good day out for a small outlay by those who can remember the original L.I.G. Walk.

Those happy days have gone, and train fares have been raised at least twice since that time, so that, for a day walk from Glenbrook the return fare is at least 7/- plus tram or bus fares to Central for those who do not live along the Western Line or who do not possess season tickets. In addition, standing room only is usually provided on the return trains from Glenbrook when the party are tired out, because none of the Blue Labyrinth is really easy walking country. In fact it provides an excellent testing ground for the map reading ability of even experienced bushwalkers. The area includes Euroka Clearing, the venue of several reunions, Nepean Lookout above the junction of Glenbrook Creek and the Nepean River, as well as St. Helena and "The Oaks", meccas for quiet camps. Three excellent day walks in this area from Glenbrook - Euroka - Nepean Lookout - Emu Plains, Glenbrook - Glenbrook Gorge - Emu Plains, and Blaxland - St. Helena - Glenbrook are now really too expensive for general club use, while the walk from Warrimoo - Fitzgerald's Creek - Penrith has become out of the question as a day outing for young people, who are unable, because of their occupations, to participate in the current prosperity.

The time seems to have arrived for the Lower Income Group to function in earnest and provide, say on every second or third Sunday, a walk which will involve the expenditure of a maximum of 5/- in train fares. The National Park, Garrawarra Primitive Area and the area West of Heathcote and Waterfall are already adequately covered in the walks programme. But the area West of Hornsby, Mt. Kuringai and Cowan Stations might commend itself to walks leaders, especially as there is a bus service returning from Galston and Galston Gorge on Sunday evening. Kuringai Chase National Park is neglected in most of our walking. It can be conveniently reached from Pymble (bus to Warrimoo Road or Hassell Park, St. Ives, if required) or from Wahroonga (Grosvenor Road leads right into the park in  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles). On this route Spring Gulley is contaminated, so drink from side creeks, and even then boil water in dry seasons. Easy access to the Chase is also available from Mt. Kuringai, Berowra and Cowan Stations, but ferryman's charges are involved to cross Cowan Creek at Woodnutt's and Windeybank's boatsheds. There is a bus service (2 trips) from Terrey Hills and Belrose to Chatswood on Sunday evening. Lady Davidson Park (Upper Middle Harbour) is within easy walking distance of Lindfield, Killara or Gordon stations. This area is a delight in August and September, when the local wildflowers are at their best and provides the only approach into the least frequented parts of French's Forest. Areas East from Campbelltown, Lumeah and Minto leading to George's River,

10.

O'Hares Creek, Punchbowl Creek and Pheasant Creek can all be reached in just over an hour from Central and at return rail fares of 5/- or less.

With a little thought and ingenuity, it should be possible for enthusiastic walks leaders to select interesting day walks within some of the dwindling bush country still left around the City outskirts suitable for undisturbed bushwalking. So, when arranging your walk for the next Walks Programme, REMEMBER THE LOWER INCOME GROUP, and advertise the fact that the fare is not expensive, so that members, particularly those of the L.I.G., can have the benefit of an inexpensive day out.

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Noticed a very "social" picture of Private T.A. Edwards complete with Pepsodent smile, sipping tea with his mates prior to the Recruit's March through Sydney, in a recent Thursday's "Sun". Could this be the well known S.B.W. "John" Edwards?

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TASMANIAN TOURS. Betty Holdsworth and Edna Stretton are going to lead Will Rogers, Colin Ferguson, Ernie French and David Ingram on a jaunt to the Apple Isle commencing from Melbourne on December 17th. David, who is at present in Broken Hill, will travel via Adelaide to join the party. The Scenic Reserve is a "must", then one party will visit "The Frenchman" and Gordon River on the West Coast, while the other will go on to the National Park in the Derwent Valley and historic parts around Hobart.

Following closely on their heels, Betty Swain and Pat Sullivan will lead David King, John Bukluck and Ross Laird into the Scenic Reserve early in February.

If the amount of planning has anything to do with both expeditions a riotous time seems certain for both parties.

...

We are pleased to announce having received a supply of the newly-printed "Tasmanian Tramp" - the Hobart Walking Club's Annual. We have read and enjoyed it and can thoroughly recommend it to all walkers, particularly those who will be spending their holidays in Tasmania in the near future. Obtain your copy from the Business Manager of this magazine. Only a few left.

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Our Federation reporter advises that the last meeting was fully occupied in hearing a discourse of Wildflowers by Thistle Harris. A full evening's business is planned next month and the usual report will appear.

"LE ROI EST MORT  
VIVE LE ROI".

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Paddy bids farewell to the dying year with few regrets. It has been a difficult and wearing year. Nevertheless the new shop and factory have now been built and the ashes of Christmas Day 1950 are now but a painful memory.

That this has been achieved is thanks in no small measure to those bushwalkers who willingly and freely gave up their weekends to help and to the loyalty of Paddy's staff who have worked hard and sometimes under difficult circumstances to keep the business going.

None of us knows what the New Year has in store for us, but Paddy can promise better service than in 1951.

In the meantime Paddy invites all walkers to inspect his new shop where stocks are nearly back to normal.

Full supplies of rucksacks, tents, aluminium and plastic goods, also dried potato, onion, carrot, cabbage and mixed vegetables now in stock.

Proofed japara cape groundsheets on hand too.

Plio-film heat-sealing bags will prove handy for salt, coffee, biscuits, or for any purpose where moisture must be kept in or out. They're cheap too.

There are also a few japara buckets.

Plenty of knife, fork and spoon sets and, whadderyerknow, they are down in price - 5/- now. A handy gift.

Best of luck folks. A Happy Christmas and a good New Year to all.

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PADDY PALLIN,

201 Castlereagh Street,  
Phone: M 2678. (Between Park & Bathurst Streets,)

S Y D N E Y.

