

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers,
14 Atchison Street, St. Leonards.

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Meetings at the Club Rooms on Wednesday evenings after 7.30 p.m.

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DECEMBER, 1974.

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THE NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING.

by Jim Brown.

It could be counted as a quiet and thoroughly normal monthly business meeting, with about 35 people present. Three new members were welcomed - Keith Teasdale, and father and daughter team of Terence and Greer Taylor. Two other new admissions (Margaret Bentley and Patrick McBride) were not in the gathering.

Before going on to the standard affairs of the meeting, the President invited Paul Sharp to make a special announcement, which had to do with a proposed horse riding weekend in the Budawang Mts. early in December. Learning it was proposed to ride up from Yadbora homestead to the Monolith Valley area, Owen Marks couldn't resist asking if the horses were winged like Pegasus.

Reading of October's minutes was uneventful, and in the Correspondence we learned the Club had received a valuation assessment of \$15,000 for its Kangaroo Valley property. This document had been passed to the Management Committee: in response to a question it was stated the rates would "not necessarily increase steeply". Frank Malloy had tendered his withdrawal from a position on Committee in the role of Federation delegate. Alex Colley, as Conservation Secretary, had replied to Federation's proposed policies on National Parks (published in the October magazine). Significant points in his comment were:- Paragraph 1 - more than "samples" of natural country were needed; Paragraph 3 - mechanical types of transport to be prohibited in wilderness areas; and Paragraph 5 - permits to enter parks should require undertakings from visitors to be careful with fire and not to carry firearms, etc. The Secretary mentioned some publicity from an organisation offering Club room facilities at Rushcutters Bay - the indications were that a very steep rental would be involved, and enquiries were being made.

After the Treasurer's financial statement told us we had \$1595 in working funds, Bill Hall announced the Christmas Party would be held in the Club Rooms on December 18th, and the President drew attention to the revision of Search & Rescue lists now being undertaken for Federation. Searchers may volunteer on any one of three categories - available immediately, in 24 hours, or at weekends only.

Once again there were no takers for the vacant position of Federation Delegate (either with or without associated place on Committee); and we were off on the Walks Activity Report, starting with Jim Vatiliotis' Mt. Talaterang trip of 11-13 October, attended by six people. Saturday night's camp was made at Warre Head, and a successful crossing of Pigeon House Gorge occupied Sunday morning. That weekend Frank Taeker's team of 8 were from Mt. Victoria along the Grose, camping at Orang Utan Creek Saturday, and joining up with the day walk led by Christine Kirkby on Sunday; as there were 17 on the day trip the combined party was spread over a good length of the tourist tracks out from Blackheath during its return. The other day walk was conducted by David Ingram along Cowan Creek and attended by no less than 24. He reported the weather as ideal and "no one got injured".

Over the October 18-20 weekend Bob Hodgson's team of 6 were on Ettrema Creek, finding the Naked Pass without difficulty, but a good deal of boulder-hopping along Ettrema before clambering out on Howards Pass. Margaret Reid took a leisurely trip to Pindar Cave, where the 12 starters camped overnight, while Hans Beck's day walk down Glenbrook Creek proved a mite too long to be covered with a starting time near 10.0 a.m. and was curtailed at Duck Hole, thence Glenbrook.

The following weekend Bob Younger's crew went to Yerranderie, where there is some evidence of restoration of further buildings, and Malcolm Noble had 7 people on the Shoalhaven near Tolwong, where it proved possible to cross the river without extreme difficulty. There was rain most of Sunday during Bill Hall's trip from Waterfall to Palona Brook and South West Arm, with 14 folk and an outstanding show of late boronias.

On the first November weekend it was understood Alan Pike's programmed Cedar Creek trip was cancelled, but Frank Taeker had a goodly team of 21 to the Budawangs in somewhat cold and showery conditions, notwithstanding which it was described as an excellent walk. Ray Carter went from Waterfall to Otford via Garie Trig with a party of 17, finding the morning rather damp, but with improving conditions after lunch.

The final weekend to report, 8-10 November, included Jim Vatiliotis' prowl along Beecroft Peninsula, with a group of 13, including a good sprinkling of white ants, who refused to walk through the scrub and took to the bush roads instead. There was some doubt whether Wilf Hilder's day jaunt around Gerringong Falls had gone forward, but Bill Hall had 15 along the coastal rocks from Werong to Burning Palms - and it was still "hot as hell" within 20 feet of the sea.

Gordon Broome reported that the group of S.B.W. members who were interested in "caretaking" an Alpine Hut had secured the watch over Spencers Peak Hut. Funds were not needed, but help in the form of manpower and supply of materials would be appreciated in restoring the building.

This saw the night out and at 9.25 p.m. the business was over for another month.

THE CAPRICORN TIGER.

by Alex Colley.

When I met my friend and ex-workmate, Bob Brain, a few weeks ago, it was not long before we were discussing our visits to Central Australia. I went with Bill and Doreen Hand on a "Sundowner" coach tour, he as road design consultant to the Alice Springs Council.

"You know," said Bob, "I went for a drive out of Alice Springs and saw a tiger." The thought crossed my mind that Bob was an Englishman and perhaps saw something familiar to us but not to him. As he described the animal, I was sure that this was not so. And I was certain that what he described was exactly what he saw. He thought it might have escaped from

a circus. N. b. l. I thought. Tigers seldom escape, and if they do, they are soon caught. A carnivorous animal of that size would find neither enough food nor enough water on its way to Alice Springs. The people who should know about it were the aboriginals. Bill Hand had described their interest and excitement on the arrival of a new animal, such as the rabbit. I had my doubts as to whether they ever went walkabout now that their food came from shops, but it was worth trying, so I wrote to Mr. Garry Stoll, Superintendent of Hermannsburg Mission, as follows:-

"I hope you will not mind me seeking your help in solving the mystery of a strange phenomenon observed in your district. I visited your mission with the "Sundowners" a few weeks ago, and it seemed to me that your people would be the best informed on the subject of my inquiry.

"The phenomenon was reported to me by Mr. Robert Brain, transportation consultant, who is doing a road design study for Alice Springs Council on the Gap road south of the town. I have worked in close association with Mr. Brain and know he is a very competent observer.

"During a recent weekend he drove along the road which goes past Narvietsoma homestead. Some 70 miles out of Alice Springs, at the point where this road crossed the Tropic of Capricorn, an animal which closely resembled a tiger crossed the road about one hundred yards in front of him. He tells me it was about 3 feet long, if not more, not including the tail. It was not the colour of a tiger, but had stripes resembling those of a tabby cat. Its tail, however, was definitely not that of a cat as it was curved, carried near to the ground and curled up at the end. Mr. Brain stopped, reversed his car, and looked for its footprints, which were barely discernible in the hard ground. He was tempted to look for it in the thick scrub into which it disappeared, but thought better of this because it was too big an animal to "tangle with".

"My interest was heightened by the fact that I too saw a large member of the cat family when camped on the Thompson River a year ago. I observed this animal for some 30 seconds, on the other side of the river, some 100 yards away. Its body length was about 2 feet or more, height some 18" and colour jet black.

"Bill Hand told us that the domestic cats which had taken to the bush in the Territory had grown considerably larger, but unless there has been some extraordinary mutation in the species, I don't believe they could possibly have grown to the size of the animals we have seen.

"The point where Mr. Brain saw the animal was apparently some 40 miles north of the mission. I have no doubt that the aboriginal people would be very interested in it, partly because it is a new animal and perhaps because it would be a threat to animal life in the bush or even to humans. I feel confident that they know what it is and that they have at some time tracked it and observed it. I wonder if you would mind asking them for me what it is?"

Some three weeks later I received the following reply from Mr. C. A. Jericho, Manager of the Mission:-

"Replying to your letter regarding the sighting of a large cat approximately three feet long.

"After making some enquiries, it appears that there are cats around which have gone wild, but would never grow to the size you mentioned. Some aboriginals have said that they had seen these cats the size of a small dog, approximately 16 inches high and perhaps a couple of feet long, but generally are very vague about the size.

"I feel that I can offer you no concrete answer, as many people tell you different stories about different animals they have seen, but nobody is very sure of their facts.

"I am sorry I cannot be of much help to you."

So the aboriginals didn't really care. I wondered if they would be worried if there were a whole plague of tigers.

Next weekend I went for a walk from Wheeny Creek to Wiseman's Ferry with Roy Braithwaite and Paul Howard. I told them the story, and Paul said he thought it might be a thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger. He assured me that these had been seen on the mainland in the early days.

Back home I looked up Troughton's "Furred Animals of Australia," and there it was -- the striped marsupial cat -- a member of the family dasyurops, but without a species name because no scientist had ever caught one. Troughton writes:-

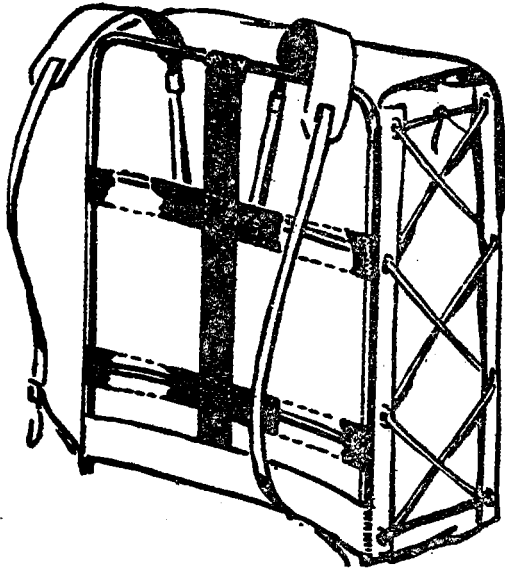
"For over sixty years there have been reports of the existence in North Australia of a large striped animal, described as a cat just growing into a tiger. Although such an animal has been seen on several occasions no specimen has yet reached any museum. It has therefore been impossible to verify the occurrence scientifically. There are often simple explanations of such reports; but the consistency of the accounts leaves little doubt of the presence of some large carnivorous marsupial of the dasyurid family. In future, observers should make every effort to obtain both the skull and complete skin of a specimen, and ensure preservation by heavy salting, before forwarding the remains to the local museum. The cat-like animal is well-known to the aborigines, and has been seen on several occasions by whites."

Troughton quotes six sightings of the animal, the first in 1871. Two were by Ion Idress who wrote:-

"Up here in York Peninsula we have a tiger-cat that stands as high as a hefty, medium-sized dog. His body is lithe and sleek and beautifully striped in black and grey. His pads are armed with lance-like claws of great tearing strength. His ears are sharp and pricked, and his head is shaped like that of a tiger. My introduction to this beauty was one day when I heard a series of snarls from the long buffalo-grass skirting a swamp. On peering through the grass I saw a full-grown kangaroo, backed up against a tree, the flesh of one leg torn clean from the bone. A streak of black and grey shot towards the "roo's" throat, then seemed to

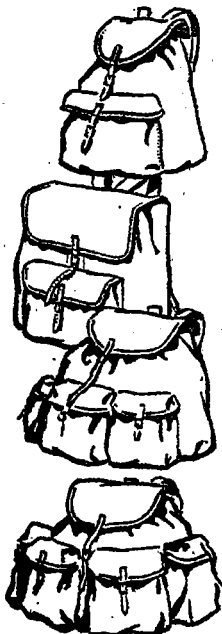
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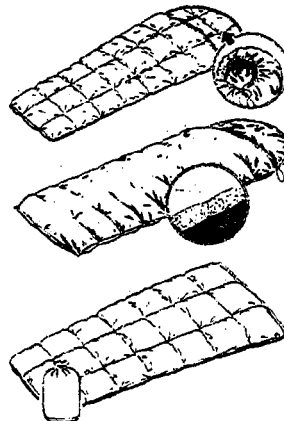
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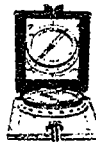
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Paddy Pallen

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twist in the air, and the kangaroo slid to earth with the entrails literally torn out. In my surprise I incautiously rustled the grass, and the great cat ceased the warm feast that he had promptly started upon, stood perfectly still over his victim, and for ten seconds returned me gaze for gaze. Then the skin wrinkled back from the nostrils, white fangs gleamed, and a low growl issued from his throat. I went backwards and lost no time in getting out of the entangling grass. The next brute I saw was dead, and beside him was my much prized staghound, also dead. This dog had been trained from puppyhood in tackling wild boars, and his strength and courage were known by all the prospectors over the country. The cat had come fossicking round my camp on the Alice River."

Troughton concludes:-

"Although there is some difference concerning the size of the animal and disposition of the stripes, there seems no doubt that a large striped marsupial-cat haunts the tangled forests of North Queensland. The creature probably lives in the thick forests which man seldom penetrates, or in which he makes so much noise getting through that the more wary animal is seldom seen. The fact that the Tasmanian Tiger is conspicuously striped certainly suggests the possibility of a similar large carnivorous marsupial having sought refuge from the competition of the wild dog in the rocky forest-covered region of North Queensland."

But how did the animal cross the vast arid tract that lies between Northern Queensland and Alice Springs? This is explained by the unprecedented run of good seasons in Western Queensland and the Territory ever since 1968. No doubt they provided it with sufficient water, food and cover to reach Central Australia.

So that fixes Bob Brain's "tiger", but not my king-sized black pussy-cat. Has anyone any ideas?

DON'T PANIC...AND LIVE.

(From an article published in the Bush Fire Bulletin, Spring 1973)

Over several years, studies in and around Canberra by officers of the Forestry and Timber Bureau (a division of the Dept. of National Development) have produced much positive information to aid human survival in bushfires.

A number of popular misconceptions (death from lack of oxygen if trapped in a fire, or a car petrol tank exploding if exposed to naked flame) causes many persons to panic and sometimes flee a safe refuge.

In grass or forest fires, the main cause of death is heat stroke in an extreme form as a result of excessive heat radiation. Even severe burns to the body are not an immediate cause of death unless accompanied by heat stroke. Most of the heat felt from a bushfire is of the radiant variety and though it can reach high intensity it lasts only a relatively short time.

Radiant heat, like light, travels in straight lines, does not penetrate solid substances and is easily reflected - physical principles basic to survival procedures.

Even in a severe fire the temperature near the ground remains cool as hot combustion gases are rapidly carried away by convection. Bushfires in the open do not deplete the oxygen concentration in the air outside the actual zone where combustion is taking place.

If a person can survive the flaming period of a forest fire (which rarely exceeds three to four minutes at a given point), there is no risk of succumbing later. Most fire fighters have long realised that the cabin of a motor vehicle provides good protection from radiation.

At Lara, Victoria, in 1969, seventeen people were killed when a grassfire cut a four-lane highway. They abandoned their cars and tried to out-run the fire, while at least six other people at the same place remained in their cars and survived, even though one car burnt out after the fire had passed.

Research has shown that the standard petrol tank is quite difficult to explode. When a tank contains petrol the space above the liquid always contains a mixture that is too rich in petrol vapour for an explosion to occur. If a container is not vented, say as in a sealed 44-gallon drum, the vapour inside can build up high pressure and rupture the drum however.

To study the performance of a car as a shield against radiation, cars were subjected to intense radiant heat from windrows of burning pine. The cars were placed between two windrows 25 ft. apart and the windrows were ignited simultaneously. The most severe test simulated the peak radiation of an intense forest fire.

The car windows cut down the radiation inside the cabin to around half of that received outside at the peak of the fire but a person inside would have suffered severe burns to any bare skin. Although air temperature inside the car did not rise to a hazardous level, smoke from smouldering plastic and rubber materials used in interior linings caused severe discomfort. However the period of intense heat in the tests exceeded that which would be experienced in most forest situations and was far greater than would ever be experienced in grassfires.

HOW TO SURVIVE.

In spite of warnings and precautions, situations will probably continue to develop in which fires threaten houses and trap car travellers. The Forestry and Timber Bureau offers the following advice:-

1. If fire threatens your house - stay there. You will survive peak radiation from the fire even if the house burns down later and you stand a good chance of saving the house as well.
2. At any fire, wear clothing (preferably wool) which covers your body, arms, and legs. This will allow you to work more effectively as a fire-fighter and will provide a radiation shield which might just save your life.

3. Avoid panic by preparing to fight the fire around the house. Direct other people to useful jobs such as filling utensils with water, blocking cracks with wet blankets and ensuring windows and doors are tightly closed.
4. Do not drive a motor vehicle blindly through heavy smoke. Switch on headlights and park adjacent to bare areas beside the road.
5. Wind up the windows and shelter from radiation beneath the dashboard with a rug or some other article (such as a floor mat) covering your body. If the vehicle catches alight you can leave it but keep your skin covered as much as possible.
6. Remain calm and have confidence that the petrol tank will not explode and that even in the worst situations it will be some minutes before the vehicle catches alight. In a grass fire the flames will last for 30 seconds or less and the chances of survival are very good. In a high intensity forest fire the flames will last for 3 to 4 minutes and your chances of survival are lower but they will be better in a vehicle than in the open.

Survival on foot in a forest fire or a grassfire is not all that easy - even for experienced persons. The following instructions are of the type given to firefighters who have some knowledge of the forest and forest fires, but do not guarantee survival in every forest fire situation:-

- A. Try to move on to bare or burnt ground.
- B. Do not run uphill or away from the fire unless you know a safe refuge is handy.
- C. Move across the slope out of the path of the headfire and work your way downslope towards the back of the fire.
- D. Do not attempt to run through flames unless you can see clearly behind them. This generally means that the flames are less than 5 ft. high and less than 5 to 10 ft. deep at the back or on the flanks of the fire. Lulls in the fire often result in the flames in these parts being low enough to step or run through to the burnt ground beyond.
- E. When conditions become severe use every possible means to protect yourself from radiation. On bare ground cover yourself with dirt or sand if possible or use wheel ruts, depressions, large rocks or logs to give protection. If you stay put you have a fair chance of survival.
- F. Take refuge in ponds, running streams or culverts but AVOID elevated water tanks. Water at ground level does not heat up quickly but in elevated tanks it becomes warm very rapidly. A body immersed in luke-warm water cannot sweat and at a temperature of 115 degrees Fahrenheit a state of collapse will be reached in about 3 minutes. In 1939 some persons died in Victoria during fires after climbing into elevated water tanks.
- G. Remain calm and do not run blindly from the fire. If you become exhausted you are much more prone to heat stroke and you may easily overlook a safe refuge. Consider an alternative course of action.

Behind all these instructions are three basic principles which must be remembered at all times:-

- I. Select an area where there is the least amount of combustible material.
- II. Use every means to protect yourself from radiation from the flames.
- III. Remain calm and don't panic.

Author: N.P. Cheney, Forestry & Timber Bureau,
National Development, Vol.3, No.5, 1972.

WALKS SECRETARY'S NOTES, JANUARY, 1975.

1975
January

by Bob Hodgson.

- Sunday 5 - Bill Hall is getting cracking with the first day walk of the New Year. Bush scenery from Waterfall, spectacular ocean views on the cliff track to Otford.
- 10, 11, 12 - Good tracks most of the way on Hans Beck's Megalong Crossing test walk. A popular variation of the usual Cox's River walk that has not been done for some time. Irresistible swimming pools en route.
- Sunday 12 - More track walking with Joe Marton down Perry's Lookdown. Enjoy the scenic grandeur of the Grose Valley and the green rain forest of the Grand Canyon. This is the only day walk classified as a test walk on the Summer Programme as most of our day walk leaders consider it is too hot to do long day walks in summer time.
- 17, 18, 19 - President's Walk: Barry will lead you up the grassy banked Murrumbidgee Creek (bring your swimmers), then up to Bindook Falls where for a little effort you will be rewarded by the awesome sight of these canyon falls. Further effort required to view Tomat Falls from the bottom of the gorge. A really beautiful walk.
- Sunday 19 - A very popular walk in the cool green gullies of the Blue Labyrinth. Margaret Reid is your leader on this very delightful walk.
- 24,25,26,27 - Holiday Weekend: David Rostron is off on the marathon li-lo trip of the year. All the way from Megalong Creek, drifting lazily along down to White Dog where the exit will be performed. An idyllic long weekend.
- 24 - 27 - Helen Gray will be setting up camp on the banks of the

- 1975
January Kangaroo River on our Coolana property for a holiday lazing in the sun and comparing recipies in a sort of competition to consume the most exotic food. Families welcome.
- 24 - 27 - Looking at this walk on the programme one can be excused for thinking that this is another version of around the world in 80 days, but it is only that the mapping authorities have named every feature of this fascinating and little walked area. This is a sequel to my Ettrema Creek trip of the Spring Programme to view the country to the east of Ettrema.
- Monday 27 - Bill Hall intends to have a very pleasant day alternately walking and refreshing in the pools of the Woronora River.
- 31, Feb. 1, 2 - Abseiling, bombing and swimming on this adventurous canyon trip down Jerrara Creek into the grandeur of Bungonia Gorge. A good soak in the Shoalhaven and then back out the easy way, Barbers Creek. Book early with John Campbell for this exciting trip.
- 31, Feb. 1, 2 - An interesting walk in the lower Blue Mountains with Ray Hookway up front, exploring the lower reaches of Springwood Creek and the lower Grose River. Plenty of beaut swimming spots on the Grose. Tremendous scenery from Faulconbridge Point but a long road bash back to Faulconbridge.
- Sunday 2 - A lovely easy little trip but with plenty of good views of Pittwater and a few aboriginal carvings. Barry Zieren is going to show you the best of this area.

SOCIAL NOTES.

Owen Marks.

Don't forget our great XMAS PARTY - 18th December at the clubrooms. Bill Hall (phone 57-5145) is the Convenor. Bring a glass and a plate of party food - all drinks will be supplied by the Club.

The films supplied by the Commonwealth Film Society to be shown on 22nd January next start with Overture - Hoffnung Cartoon, then an aboriginal film, "Central Australian Walkabout". Also "Raising the 'Wassa' from Stockholm Harbour", this ship was sunk about 500 years ago. There's another film too, but I forget its name, but the Epilogue is "Sinbad the Sailor Cartoon" with Rossini music, "The Thieving Magpie". It should be a good programme.

On 15th January there will be a talk with slides about Lamington National Park by Victor Lewis, and on 29th January Gerhard Ruhl is going to retrace the journeys of Alexander the Great in Afghanistan and Iran.

TASMANIAD - CONCLUSION.The Journey Home.

by Kathie Stuart.

The planeload I was with was flown the direct route to Hobart, i.e. over Federation Peak - strange, mist-wreathed crags, higher than the plane, over on our left. We didn't see Pedder; it, too, was on our left, but too far off in the distance. The pools and dams coming into Hobart were a greeny-brown rather than pinky-brown like the ones around Melbourne. There was one dam with really turquoise-green water in it - but milky too, so it had an opaque look.

Before we knew it we had skimmed over a gate and landed at Cambridge Airport (for light aircraft only I imagine - the place was pretty much deserted). We emerged onto the tarmac, buffeted by the same strong winds which had made our marrow thrill on the flight over, and which now took over from the noise of the plane in preventing any conversation. Out near the entrance gates, where we waited for our taxi into the city, the wind was somewhat abated, and we began to appreciate the beautiful day. It was fine and sunny, no clouds in sight (whereas out in the bush "fine" had meant "not raining" and two hours of sun constituted a sunny day). The countryside was quite deserted (after two weeks of having 17 people around), with a few cows in the paddock across the road, and the occasional motorist going past about his business. The past 13 days were already beginning to take on a rosy aspect; we felt excited and special, and showed off to ourselves and each other and the cows by seeing who could walk the furthest along the fence. The arrival of the taxi did nothing to diminish the sense of unreality - our driver sported purple pants and cardigan, purple-patterned shirt, brilliantined short-back-and-sides black hair, and a pair of wraparound sunglasses with silver plastic frames.

In Hobart we wandered round the little mini-museums and the shops, buying apples, honey, booze, and shoes; enjoying being unoccupied and free to watch other people at work; secretly trying to attract envious glances and dismissing as emotionally dull and ignorant anyone who couldn't see past the outer layer of scruffiness.

At 7.00 the returned adventurers (freshly showered and the men - with a couple of notable exceptions - shaved) congregated at Etna's (Greek? Italian?) Restaurant around 3 large end-to-ended tables and proceeded for the next four hours or so to indulge in food, drink and merriment in inverse proportions. By the end of the meal (which was quite an affair, and increasingly unrestrained, e.g. about 25 desserts for 18 of us) the hilarity was running high, to the great distraction of the staff, who began banging dishes and turning off lights - and who could blame them? - their mistake was being so efficient in serving us that we wanted to stay forever (so they must have felt in their desperation). Determined to show ourselves still possessed of enough dignity to take a hint when we got one, we lurched out into the street with bursting tummies and half-empty bottles under our arms. Not without a parting shot however - one brave stomach stronger than the rest of us went and bought an icecream from the take-away food section of the place, and this gave the others the brilliant idea of getting some chicken to eat on a bus trip to Port Arthur the following day.

***** M O U N T A I N

***** E Q U I P M E N T

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Sat. 2nd March: The bus we had chartered to Port Arthur arrived at the hotel at 9.00, and since I wasn't going with the others (it was to be an all-day outing and I was flying out in the early afternoon), I bid them a fond farewell and embraced them all, spreading germs as I went. The bus-driver (who could only be described as natty or dapper - except that he had the wrong build) insisted on a similar farewell to which he was quite unentitled (as I attempted to point out before I was asphyxiated by sheer proximity- he was a walking advertisement for just about every brand of after-shave on the market), since he hadn't just spent a fortnight bush-walking with us; a pity - maybe some of those bushes would have scratched off some of the veneer; I much preferred the DUFT of the other 17.

I was offered a lift to the fruit markets (since I had decided to take home some Real Tasmanian Apples as a present for the family, not knowing what else Tasmania was famous for), and was deposited on the other side of a long narrow park opposite the warehouse. This gave me an advantage, and I reached the warehouse just as the bus turned the corner round the park and came bearing down on me. The doors flew open and everyone else hopped on the bandwagon by hopping off the bus and buying up big. Fresh fruit - yum. There were some beautiful ripe nectarines, but I was sorry I got them later - I gave up trying to eat them before the fruit fly inspectors got on the train that evening and hid them away in my pack, which meant a major excavation each time I felt like one. In Sydney I unpacked a plastic bag of nectarine mash.

After I'd got my bag of apples to the hotel (which entailed such things as a half hour wait at the wrong bus stop) and packed and repacked them about seven times to eliminate tell-tale bulges and minimise bruising (the exercise itself ironically defeated much of this latter purpose), I lay down for a second to relax - and woke up with 20 minutes to get down to the terminus in town, carrying a pack which now weighed 42 lbs. It could have been hallucination due to my exhausted state (I'd been up till 2 a.m. talking with some of the others after the restaurant) but I have a strong memory image of a cop on a motorbike whizzing past every 2 minutes or so (with me wishing someone would give me a lift or even just take the pack for me), but always in the same direction as I was going, so that I never got to see his face; no matter - by the time I reached my destination (with a minute to spare - "No thanks to him," I felt like shouting), I could have identified him by the back of his neck.

The flight back to Melbourne was basically the same as the one in the other direction, with the following interesting modifications: a diversion to Launceston to pick up some of an 80-person plane load stranded there; a burning warehouse (?) somewhere near Tullamarine Airport (briefly glimpsed as we began to land). At Hobart it had been overcast and drizzly (we must have been really lucky with the day before) and I'd started out wearing skivvy, jeans, shoes, etc. In Melbourne it was so hot that I changed into shirt, shorts and thongs and was still quite comfortable in them at 8 p.m. when I changed back after boarding my train for Sydney.

The train journey was also somewhat repetitious; with one notable (and pleasant) difference - this time there was no armrest in the middle and I was able to spread out comfortably (compared with last time at least) across the two seats.

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