

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

A Monthly Bulletin devoted to matters of interest to
The Sydney Bushwalkers
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WEATHERS

Thomas Hardy.

This is the weather the cuckoo likes,
And so do I,
When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,
And nestlings fly:
And the little brown nightingale bills his best,
And they sit outside at "The Travellers' Rest,"
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,
And citizens dream of the south and the west,
And so do I.

This is the weather the shepherd ~~shuns~~
And so do I;
When beaches drip in browns and duns,
And thresh, and ply;
And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,
And meadow rivulets overflow,
And drops on gate-bars hang in a row,
And rooks in families homeward go,
And so do I.

FISHING AND THE BUSHWALKER

A.L. Wyborn.

My introduction to the art of angling was at the age of four. But in my youth I became an ardent follower of the game. Father brought me up in the hardest school - that is, rock fishing along the ocean front, where great care was needed to prevent being washed off the rocks by rough seas. The high cliffs between Bronte and Clovelly gave plenty of scope for rockclimbing; and rockhopping (which has been of use in bushwalking) became easy as I explored among the rock pools getting crabs or cunjevoi for bait,

Leaving fishing in salt water out as an entirely separate subject, there remains of course the fresh water, and the large number of creeks and rivers in New South Wales gives great scope for fishing. The great majority of bushwalkers are not aware of the pleasure they are missing, perhaps they think that the trouble and extra gear is too much; in any case, they say there is no time on a walk, forgetting they are often camped from dusk to well after dawn beside some suitable stream.

A bushwalker's gear of necessity must be light - "count every quarter of an ounce" - and what follows is my own personal experience of fishing with this in view. Improvisation takes the place of high class equipment and yet there is still the thrill of pulling in the catch with some practical object in view.

The trout without question offers the best fun. They have been placed in all our cold, swift running streams, such as the Snowy, Murrumbidgee, Goobarraganda and Goodradigbee in the Southern Alps; and the New England streams in the North, but certain regulations have to be observed. Trout may be taken only with rod and line (no tickling) and must be over twelve inches long. A rod license is required and the open season usually is October to April. The prohibition of the taking of more than ten in any one day is not likely to worry any bushwalker. A five foot length of dead acacia may be used for a rod, with about fifteen feet of trout line tied to the end, and the wet type of artificial fly for a lure.

Early morning or late afternoon is considered the best time. Take up a secluded position, and get the fly bobbing about near the top of the water, preferably where a small cascade ends and the still water starts, for here the trout face upstream on the lookout for insects. Do not be anxious to land the fish once on, but play him till he tires, and bring near the bank by pulling on the line, grasping the trout through the gills, while still in the water if possible. Then comes the cooking. One way without utensils is just to remove the inside, and place the trout on not too hot ashes, about ten minutes each side. The scales and skin make a protective layer on the coals, keeping the natural juices in, and are afterwards easily peeled off. Ah! how delicious are these salmonidae.

Closely allied to trout fishing is the quest of the eastern freshwater perch or Australian bass with larger artificial flies or spinner, a number 3 hook being used. I have also used small frogs or grasshoppers with success, the frogs being easily found under small river stones. All streams flowing east from the Great Divide contain perch. In the summer they are surface feeders. They lie in the shade of overhanging banks or bushes and dart like lightning at a nicely presented fly. When hooked they dive straight for the nearest nest of snags, and the necessity for a strong line will be apparent. During the winter they hunt the bottom and feed on smaller fish, worms and frogs.

Murray cod frequent all the large western flowing rivers where there are deep stretches of water. For places frequented by walkers, I have in mind the Murrumbidgee near Canberra and the Upper Murray at Tom Groggin. A strong hand line is necessary, for these fish have great strength and the number 7/0 hook should be baited with a large frog, mussels, parts of birds or rabbits, in fact any kind of flesh. Night fishing brings best results and a set line overnight takes up very little of one's time. One warning - do not lift the fish through the gills as there are sharp edges inside which can cause a nasty gash; of course, we could not lift the hundred pounder at all. October and November is the closed season, when spawning takes place.

Next to trout I think I have had more fun with eels than any other inhabitant of our streams, probably because they are so easy to catch and so abundant. Every pool in small creek or river seems to have its eel, or perhaps I should say every eel seems to have its part of a pool. Eels are found on both sides of the Divide but comparatively little is known of their habits. The females grow much larger than the males and make extremely long journeys (overland if necessary) to the oceans to spawn, while the male remains away upstream.

"Ugh!" you will say, "fancy eating those slimy things", but once prejudice is overcome and the clean white flesh is tasted, no further persuasion will be necessary. First we must catch our eel, and one up to about three to four feet and weighing four to eight pounds is best for eating. A strong hand line is needed, using a number 6/0 hook or number 9/0 hook for large eels. The hook being preferably attached by four inches of wire trace to prevent cutting by the many rows of teeth or rather serrations, in the eel's mouth. Frogs, grubs or any kind of meat can be used for bait. They will take even a piece of salami sausage being, I think, the only living creatures to do this, not counting bushwalkers.

Eels can be caught any time, but easiest at night when they always venture from their rocky homes. Again the set line may be used - tied to a tree perhaps - and the eel picked up next morning - it is so simple. If you were to wait for the demise of an eel after taking it out of water, you would die of starvation, so the best way is to despatch it quickly by a knife through the brain. Then comes the job of skinning before cleaning. Cut a hole in the lower jaw and hook the eel by this to a broken twig on a tree. Then cut the skin right round the body close to the head and use two hands, with sand if necessary for a grip, to peel the skin right back and off the tail. The eel may be boiled, fried or wound round a stick and grilled à la barbecue, but very large eels require boiling first to remove the fattiness.

Crayfish also provide a limited amount of meat but should be caught only if food is urgently needed, as they are the scavengers which help to keep our creeks clean. When brought to the surface hanging to the bait, a walker would have to take them by hand. Quickness is needed here to grasp them by the back of the head, for the large nippers on some of these crustaceans could damage a man's finger.

This idea of combining a little fishing with bushwalking can give considerable pleasure, especially on long trips, where a little time can be allowed on the itinerary, and a rest is gained at the same time. Then, too, fresh meat is very often welcome and lends variety to the dried "bark" we are forced to carry.

The weight of fishing gear is negligible, just a few well chosen hooks, artificial flies and a piece of line, yet in an emergency, such as getting lost, these few extras could mean sustenance for a considerable time.

THERMOSTATS FOR BUSHWALKERS (PART 11)

By "Bush Chemist"

Man, though he may be cold-hearted, is warm-blooded, and his body temperature normally remains amazingly constant at 98.4 degrees F. Most folk know that the body is cooled by the evaporation of sweat from the sebaceous glands, with which the skin is abundantly provided. As it requires heat to evaporate water - ask any boiler attendant - the body loses heat according to the amount of perspiration evaporated.

A noteworthy point is at once apparent. If you are perspiring profusely in the body's attempts to keep cool, don't mop your face. Nature intended the sweat to evaporate on the skin, and if you make it evaporate from your handkerchief instead, that is so much water wasted as far as its cooling effect goes.

The other side of the temperature regulation question is how the body keeps warm. The answer is, by burning up food in muscular exertion. That may be all very well, you say, while walking or taking other active exercise. How about when the body is at rest?

When the body is resting or sleeping, the majority of the required warmth comes from the muscular exertion of breathing. Should this not be sufficient to maintain that 98.4 degrees, more muscles must be exercised, so what does the body do? It shivers.

Once in my tenderfoot days I shivered vigorously and continuously for about four hours, while sleeping in camp at Katoomba, in midwinter, with only one blanket between me and the cold, hard world. It was really remarkable that after a while the steady shivering made me almost comfortably warm, and certainly the night passed with no ill effects, not even a cold.

To warm up after that chilling reminiscence, let us imagine a blazing hot summer day, and a party of walkers making their way some place, preferably to the nearest swimming pool. What headgear do they wear if they are wise?-- white hats, the reason being that white reflects away the sun's rays, while dark colours or black trap the infra red and high frequency heat waves, converting them all to low frequency waves of tangible heat. (A further advantage of white hats is, of course that they make it easier for the Search and Rescue party to see you when you are lost).

Finally, a cheering note for those who dislike the chores around the camp. By an extension of the principle mentioned in connection with hats, we know that a bright metallic surface such as a polished billy tends to reflect away the heat waves of your fire, while a smoked or black surface absorbs nearly all the heat waves striking it. Hence a blackened billy will boil faster, other things being equal, than a bright and shining one. The solution is, in general, to clean only the inside of your billy and let the outside stay black. However, watch that you don't acquire a thick black coating of ash plus wood-tar, as this acts as an excellent insulator and often accounts for a billy which is very slow to boil.

NIGHT SCENE"M. Bacon"

"HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY" was a picture noted for many things. Not the least was the glorious choral singing which was used as a background almost throughout the picture.

The same Glee Club (or rather a better one, because it was more spontaneous) was singing in Hyde Park, London. It was a warm, moonlight night, the centuries-old plane trees the foreground for a deep-blue sky, flecked with white clouds and sprinkled with stars.

A number of groups were singing nearby - some singing hot jazz, some just the end of a night after a couple of pots; but the largest and most earnest was a group singing in Welsh. A man of about 40 had a crumpled penny novelette to do duty as a baton to a choir of singers who had just come to raise their voices in song. These rich and earnest voices were singing the folk-songs of Wales - young girls, old men, soldiers and passers-by. Some just came to watch and wonder - like myself!

One soldier, about 25, 6'4" tall, who had cap to one side and a radiant expression from the sheer joy of singing, stood in the open and sang and sang in his native tongue - a superb bass to go with his wide, deep chest. There was a glorious soprano, full and rich, singing again with an earnestness that was most real.

Now the conductor had them singing in four parts - now in unison - now with a solo and chorus. The harmony was amazing. The group swelled as solemn men and women opened their mouths and poured out song.

Behind me, a tenor came up.

I saw, right in the centre, almost overshadowed by the conductor, a sailor lad, perhaps 17, singing with all his soul and with all the fervour of a fanatic, these songs in the Welsh tongue. Others saw him, and heads nodded and eyes turned towards him to watch his enthusiasm. It was as if this lad was lonely in the great heart of London, and found full and deep friendship in this group reminding him so strongly of home.

More songs! Requests came from the people gathered round. Every heart was joining in, and nearly all were singing.

On the edge there appeared a lean and obviously under-nourished lad, tiny neck and chin, face widening towards the temples, and crowned with a tangled, crinkly mass of gingerish hair, but - THE VOICE - a full, rich baritone, that would have done justice to a soloist in a symphony orchestra and full chorus - even for the solo in Beethoven's Ninth!

June Winsbury would like to hear from anyone interested in doing a trip to the Alps (Australian) leaving Sydney the week end 1st to 3rd March next. Ring B0531 extension 236.

Extract from the Third Report to the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction of the Rural Reconstruction Commission.

"National Parks and National Recreation Reserves require consideration because many of them are located in watershed areas which are of importance either as catchments, or for forestry, or both; in addition, they have some value as rough grazing land. The public is learning to appreciate these reserves to which there is reasonable access and gradually a national conscience is being developed with regard to them. There is some diversity of opinion as to the correct principles which should guide the management of such areas. One view is that they should be left entirely in their natural state; but in some cases this would mean the growth of a forest so dense as to be impassable; and in others many of the native animals, being herbivorous, would only be controlled in numbers by starvation and disease. While it would be well to reserve parts of each area as museum pieces only to be entered by an occasional ranger or parties of qualified scientific observers, such a policy is scarcely of interest to the main mass of the public. It seems clear that, apart from these specimen natural areas, the remainder of the parks would be used intelligently so as to be penetrable by those members of the public who wish to visit them under the regulations prescribed. The development of these areas by the provision of roads, tracks and rest houses may be somewhat expensive and there seems good reason for using the useful production of the land within their boundaries for obtaining part of the necessary funds. The danger is that the search for funds may become a dominant feature of the administration of the area and that the managing authority may lean towards policies of exploitation which are unwise from the point of view of long-term welfare of the reserves.

Suggested Principles for Administration of Parks and Recreation Reserves: The correct principles seem to be that -

- (a) the general policy of management should conform to that of any catchment area of which the park or reserve forms a part.
- (b) any such area should be so managed as to keep erosion to the minimum that is inescapable in an upland district in its native state
- (c) timber-cutting should only be permitted on a basis approved by the Forestry Department of the State concerned.
- (d) any grazing which is allowed should be in conformity with the maintenance of the vegetational cover in a form which the controlling authority determines; and
- (e) fires should be completely controlled on the reserve except insofar as they may be required by the Forests authority for special purposes.

It is necessary to emphasise that large areas of southern Australia have a "mediterranean" climate. All steep slopes in this climatic zone will in time become bare rock unless steps are taken to prevent such a disaster. Those of the Australian Imperial Force who saw the Lebanon Range in Syria may reflect that its rocky flanks were probably once largely covered with soil which bore a forest of cedars.

The Commission urges that the maintenance of our soil, the conservation of water supplies, and the proper use of our forest resources and national parks, are matters which demand special treatment and a special organisation. They are matters which are to be regarded as a trust, not to be exploited by one generation, but cherished for those to come."

.....

We may not agree with all this. As nobody has ever seen a primitive area we don't know whether it would become "a forest so dense as to become impassable", but we do know that fires are often followed by dense low growth, and the aboriginals seemed to find their way round pretty well in primitive areas. We would probably be prepared to let the animals take their chance. But much of the Commission's report could be quoted word for word in support of our conservation aims.

GEEHI JOTTINGS

"B. Hound"

On the Geehi we met Mr. Nankervis who looks after Tom Gröggin. Said one of the girls "We didn't like the look of that big bull in your front paddock". "Oh, he's all right", was the reply, "it's the cows you want to be careful of - the female of the species is always more deadly".

Mr. Nankervis also reported that three nudists were seen making their way down the Murray. For security reasons we are not publishing their names.

"Two of the girls in the party before us slept in the hay in your shed", we said. "I hope the snakes didn't trouble them", said Mr. Nankervis. "What - have you a carpet snake?" we asked. "Oh no, not carpet snakes - tiger snakes - all sorts of snakes." We hope that Peggy and Sally had sweet dreams.

THE SPICE OF LIFE

By "Ubi"

There was Frank whom I had not seen for a year. Then, on the morning of the day we were to leave town, we acquired Douglas. Doug, had been thrown out of work owing to the strike and did not believe in suffering the inconveniences of the city. He had a complicated and detailed prayer which, briefly, wished that the strike lasted long enough for work not to be resumed before he arrived back from our trip but not long enough to seriously affect transport for his trip a week later.

The cameras clicked as soon as we arrived above Foreman's Hut for there were still extensive drifts on the range on the eastern side from Kosciusko to Twynam. Then, pausing only to settle in, have a hasty lunch and a whirlwind sweep through the hut, we did the usual thing. The excitement of approaching the highest point in Australia was not sufficient to distract our attention from our difficult breathing. While climbing up out of the Snowy near Seaman's Hut we thought we had acquired an extra-special asthma. At the top the weather behaved well. First we had a little rain and mists but at length they rolled away and revealed the whole view with the distant mountains a velvety blue. We did our best despite altitude difficulties, climbing up the end of the Etheridge Range and then crossing the Snowy and ascending the slopes of Mr. Clarke. Not until dark did we return to the hut as the sunset was one of the most beautiful I had ever seen. All the range north of us was sharpened in detail by a pervading glow in a tan shade but the colours over the summit were more brilliant if more common. It was an afternoon which caused us to turn indoors with deep satisfaction and gratitude.

On the Cootapatamba Drift we had tried our new sport. It consisted of choosing a very steep but not quite precipitous snow slope, sitting on one's groundsheet and letting gravity do the rest. The wise, of course, applied the brake on nearing the rocks when the run ended abruptly. With time our technique improved and some genius discovered that lying on the back increased the acceleration. I think, however, that the advantage was nullified in my case by the number of times I chicken-heartedly looked up to see what dangers lay ahead. The following day an excellent slope on Mt. Townsend provided the best of this sport on the whole trip. Here we consented to risk doing less walking by repeating the exhilaration of coming down the same slope many times. This sport has been officially named R-skating.

Our trouble on this trip always seemed to be that we could never catch up with ourselves. If you do not arrive at camp until 8 p.m. or later and then have to prepare and eat dinner, it is not possible to retire to bed at an early hour and the requirements of the body just preclude a very early rising. Nevertheless on our second day we were able to "tick off" everything between Townsend and Watson's Crags including Sentinel Peak which is on a long, narrow ridge running out towards the Geehi between the points mentioned. My only complaint is that the weather was too fine. I longed for the kind of weather which makes you profane while you are suffering it but which provides you with cherished memories. Everything came too easily this time - perhaps next

Though we had a late start the day we went to Tom Gröggin and though

we declared all the way to Rawson Pass that we should ignore the Summit, we climbed to the Summit again. The wind, however, was most violent and we were glad to drop over the side of the Ramshead Range towards the Thredbo. I am sure I could never survive on a steppe or travel on a tundra for, after only a day and a half without trees, I felt like hugging the first snow gums on the way down.

Perhaps I should describe our arrival at Geehi for here we all assumed another role - the other two became photographers in delirium tremens while I was assistant to photographers in delirium tremens. Not a thing could be done until it had been appraised from a photogenic point of view. The position, angle and erection of the tent and similarly of the fire had to be discussed exhaustively and packs disposed artistically. Occasionally one was invited to be "human interest" and then one did one's best to hide the holes in the back of the shorts, tidied the back of one's hair and contrived to induce an aesthetic look onto the nape of one's neck, meanwhile standing in one's best attempt at artistic position No. 79 (for Alps and Arthritis).

Having decided to dine one night at the Chalet and endeavour to get ski-ing gear, several hours were spent trying to make ourselves as presentable as possible. Surely no-one will brand me as being conceited if I claim that, with the help of all those artless little deceits (such as washing from the top of the socks to the bottom of the shorts) we did Foreman's Hut credit. Every detail of our plan worked successfully and I must say the Chalet proved most hospitable - even wanting us to stay the night - but as soon as we were in possession of our skis we abandoned the Chalet with ungrateful haste. Early to bed, early to rise, gives more time for ski-ing.

Though we are now seething with excitement in anticipation of the morrow's ski-ing I must mention our speculation in regard to the large skin which hangs in the lounge of the chalet. Was it a buffalo or a bison? Could it be a bear? We hoped it was not anything so mundane as a bullock. Maybe a llama? "I know" said Frank, thinking of our constant vigilance and our concerted preventive methods in Foreman's Hut "It is a 'Specimen of Rat Caught in Foreman's Hut'".

Our day's ski-ing fulfilled the expectations of one skier, one long-since skier and one novice who also returned home in that order chronologically, the last well after dark.

We came down to a heat wave. Frank and I farewelled Doug. at Goulburn as Frank was going to Melbourne in two days time. I had promised the latter a trip to Canberra in the interval but, alas, the strike had played havoc with the train timetables. The future looked dim. "What about hitching?" said Frank. I reminded him of the seriousness of missing a booked seat to Melbourne but you know what the young are. About the only thing worse than two days hitching in a heat wave would be two days in Goulburn in a heat wave doing nothing.

The traffic position was very bad. Those people who think that politicians rush continually between Canberra and Sydney in high-powered cars are wrong. (The alternative theory that they sit in Canberra and do nothing must be right). We got to Canberra with the aid of an ambulance and a utility the occupants of which drank a goodly mixture of plonk every time the speedometer showed less than 60 m.p.h. "But, oh, heart, heart, heart", the wearying hours of waiting on the way back. For six hours we practised every trick on the road just beyond the town for a lift of one mile. Not that we were not successful - the sparse traffic just never suited. Salvation arrived in a truck which was going all the way to Goulburn.

At last our jaunt was over and we had once again to get used to the ways of conventional living - "Pardon me interrupting, but is this the Sydney train?"

THE BUSHWALKER CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTSPOSITIONS VACANT

Wanted. Someone to report the Club's monthly meeting for the Magazine. Need not be an ex-serviceman or woman. Any or no religion no bar.

Position Vacant (Still)

When Roley and Colin were in Melbourne they were entertained by some complete strangers whom they had met in the train. Hotel accommodation was, I believe, very hard to get unless you looked very hard. On the second visit, A.W.A.S. daughter appeared. Alas, poor father! Had he but known. His guests were not even romantic enough to play "She loves me, she loves me not" with the pigeon pies. Position still vacant.

Public Notice

We are very sorry that the magazine last month was just legible. Many readers have expressed the same regret. Merely another technical trouble. The report that the magazine staff were on strike demanding a ten and a half hour day is not true. The magazine printing business continues to be well in the rearguard in regard to working conditions.

Meteorological News

The poem on the front page reminds me of the country man who was very proud of his pedigreed stock. He was most carefully tending one ram for the local show and, on the great day, drove him intown quite certain that the prize was his. Alas, the judges thought otherwise. On the way home while driving the offending ram, he met a stranger who called out "Fine Weather". "He will be tomorrow", growled the farmer.

Gardening

To Jack and Betty Rose - a rosebud. This description is rather inaccurate, however, as it is a girl. (See Geehi Jottings).

Positions Filled

This month we are pleased to be able to report two engagements and to wish happiness to the engagees. They are Kath. Doherty and Billy Burke and Bill McCourt and a girl from Newcastle (third house on left second street from tram stop).

Cats, Ferrets and Goldfish (when it comes to lapping it up)

Though we know the sweet disposition of the President, we did not expect such benevolence when we woken her up at 3 a.m. on New Year's morning. But when you have been lapping champagne all evening it makes a difference, I believe.

Amusements (Free)

Here at New Year was treated to splendid music from an orchestra of three which was most willing to play at any time. From the ridge as they made their way home, they played the favourite tunes to those still left.

BACKYARD BUSHWALKING

Heat! Vibrating palpilating heat! The very rocks seem to shimmer and tremble under the heat. The poor starved sandstone soil is baked dry and hard. In such a block as ours which has a north western aspect the very trees fail to give any shade to the sunburnt ground. Yet how the hardy natives stand up to the gruelling heat. In soil which seems to have had the last remnant of moisture cooked out of it they have their precarious foothold; it seems as if they had solved the great problem of living without water. The flannel flowers loved it - for a while, but the continued dry spell is telling on them and they are no longer producing flowers or new leaf. In fact it almost seems as if the leaves were shrinking and the plants growing smaller.

There is a pultenaea (specific name unknown to us) which flowers freely at this time of the year - one of the few shrubs which choose these hot months in which to flower. It just goes on blooming as if the heat didn't matter.

We have had one or two casualties. The woody pear which I successfully nursed through the seedling stage (baked the soil to prevent the wilt) succumbed to a day of record heat. Luckily I have others of the same crop still under cover.

Stop Press News.

The boronias and eriostemmons haven't germinated yet.

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Stock position

Rucksacks without frames O.K.

Groundsheets and cape groundsheets O.K.

Framed rucksacks and sleeping bags, supplies sometime February, date to be determined.

Paddy Pallin

327 George Street

Phone B3101

SYDNEY

Camp Gear for Walkers