

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to the Sydney Bush Walkers,
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FIRE PREVENTION SCHEMES FOR UNPROTECTED AREAS

Although volunteer bush fire brigades have been formed and equipped to undertake the fighting of bush fires in urban and rural areas, and the New South Wales Fire Brigades operate in Fire Districts under the Fire Brigades Act, responsibility for carrying out fire prevention and suppression measures in vacant Crown lands covering vast sections of the Coast and Tableland regions - in many parts contiguous to centres of population such as on the Blue Mountains - is quite beyond the resources of either of these organisations.

Funds amounting to £100,000 for expenditure on planned fire prevention works in unprotected regions in coastal and tableland areas have been made available by the State Government.

Following the serious fires in the Blue Mountains and other parts of the Coast and Tablelands during the 1957-58 fire season, the Chief Secretary, the Hon. J. A. Kelly, M.L.A., convened a special conference of the State's fire fighting services and Local Government Authorities to examine in detail proposals for combating fire outbreaks in unoccupied Crown lands contiguous to towns and settlements.

Embraced within these proposals are:-

The Blue Mountains Bush Fire District.
 The Southern Highlands (Nattai) Bush Fire District.
 The Putty Bush Fire District.
 The Barrington Tops Bush Fire District.

Broadly, the schemes are designed to include the following:-

- ★ The prevention of uncontrolled fires.
- ★ The encouragement of controlled hazard reduction at safe times of the year.
- ★ The development of a system of fire trails and firebreaks in unoccupied lands.
- ★ The setting up of means of fire detection and communication.
- ★ To facilitate attacks on fires in rough or inaccessible country at the earliest practicable stage.

This is of great interest and to the benefit of walkers, who know only too well how our walking areas have suffered in recent years,

AT OUR DECEMBER MEETING

At the commencement of the meeting our President had a busy time welcoming new members - no less than six altogether. Four of these - Jean Gordon, Elizabeth Hahn, Stan Dally and Bob Godfrey (with daughter) were admitted in December, and two others, Vi Harvey and Denise Hull in November.

Correspondence brought a request from the Hobart Walking Club for a donation towards the equipping of a hut at Port Davey as a memorial to the late Charles King. On a motion by John White, it was decided to donate £5.

A letter from Miss Daphne Ball, Hon. Sec. of the Bouddi Park Trust, said that the scrub in the park was regarded by many of the local residents as a fire menace to their properties. If they could ever prove that bushwalkers were responsible for starting a fire there it would be difficult to retain the area against the "anti-natural" elements thereabouts. Miss Ball wrote that, on a recent visit to the area, members of the S.B.W. and Technical College Walking Clubs had lit a "huge open camp fire" from which a high wind carried sparks into the only remaining green growth. The leader of the party, Eric Pegram, said that the fire complained of was already going when they got there. It was used by the whole party, and, in his opinion, there was no danger of it escaping. Bruce McInnes, who was in the party, said that the fire was in the customary place, sheltered from the wind in the lee of some bushes, and, he considered, safer than the separate camp fires of Miss Ball's party, which were surrounded by grass. Because it was sheltered from the strong Southerly there were no sparks. It was built of driftwood and there were ample people to watch and control it. John White and Kath McInnes confirmed these reports and Kath added that there was no danger because there was, in fact, hardly any material

that could burn. On a motion by Brian Harvey it was decided to write expressing regret and advising that members had been advised to take care with future fires lit in the area.

A notice from the Newcastle Technical College Bushwalkers informed us that they were forming an association to take over White's River Hut. Shares of £10 were available.

Negotiations between the Federation and property owners in Centennial Glen, Blackheath, had resulted in the property owners agreeing, willingly, to let walking parties cross their land, provided they made themselves known en route. Cattle had been shot, and, as shooters with rucksacks look like bushwalkers, the best means of identification was a Club badge. The President advised us to let them look in our rucksacks if they wanted to check for guns.

Tom Moppett told us that a special fund had been created for locating and fighting fires in vacant crown land, as suggested by the S.B.W. and other bodies some years ago.

The President informed us that several Club officers would not be standing for re-election in March. These were Edna Stretton, Membership Secretary; Tom Moppett, Conservation Secretary; and Ken Meadows, Secretary. Jess Martin would appreciate someone else taking over the duplicating, and Margaret Ryan, Assistant Secretary, would only be able to continue in her job for a few months. Tom Moppett gave a short description of the Conservation Secretary's work. Since the formation of the N.P.A. this was light. It entailed writing letters as directed by the Club, attending a few conferences, keeping the Club informed on conservation matters and making enquiries. A sound general background knowledge of conservation was needed.

At the conclusion of the meeting Frank Ashdown reported fresh hut building at Burning Palms and Era and the picking of wild flowers along the Princes Highway near Darke's Forest. It was decided that the information on the huts was not specific enough for any action on our part and there was nothing we as a Club could do to prevent wild flowing picking.

Dear Dorothy Dishkaway,

I have been terrorised by the concrete jungle opposite Hyde Park. During our Club Christmas Dance I was Stripping a Willow when I got a terrible agonising pain in the ankle above the feet.

They carried me home head first in a sleeping-bag. When I got there my ankle was all puffed up and was missing some skin. I looked at my ankle and found it had three bloody puncture marks in it. Someone suggested I had been kicked, whilst a friend said I should have been kicked anyway. The thing that worries me is that they say the Dalai Lama nests a pet poisonous snake in his beard. I couldn't see it. Does his poisonous pet have three fangs and if so, how long can I expect to live?

--- Waltzer Kruschen

THE GREAT WADE

- "Jaybee"

Only once before, and that in my first writing for the magazine, more years ago than I care to remember, have I felt impelled to use a pen name. Come to think of it, that was about a trip on the Colo River, too, but I then used a pseudonym because I was bashful, not for fear of the consequences.

Because, since the occasion of the Great Wade I have learned that some fifty years ago, the purists amongst mountaineers so deplored the use of pitons that the chappie who employed them was a cad, unfit to belong to any gentlemanly Alpine Club: while twenty years later, there was great dissension on the sporting virtue of using bottled oxygen on Himalayan peaks.

Now there's nothing in the Code of Ethics to outlaw what I did - what I induced the whole of an official party to do, but who shall say that my unorthodox method of walking along the Colo River is acceptable? - let alone commendable? In the ranks of the Ingersoll Hall Chairborne walkers may not some cry out "Oaf!" - would Max Gentle and Gordon Smith have so lessened their torment on the Colo? No, for the sake of the party, let us be anonymous. If there be shame in what we did, let us at least be the guilty unknown.

After promising to be a large party, there was a dwindling in the ranks until finally we were only six as we broke camp near the eastern end of Culoul Range on a fresh November Saturday morning, and climbed into A's Land Rover. The timber road was more or less trafficable for another four miles, but it was still only 7.15 when J pointed to a familiar side track, and we stopped and alighted, and upped packs.

We passed four hours in a journey along ridges bearing a general resemblance to much of the Blue Labyrinth, save that from the occasional high points, the country ahead, and to left and right, so far as one could see on this bright morning, was a chaotic wilderness. In the Labyrinth you can usually glimpse bits of Blue Mountain settlement or even the coastal plain. Once we passed over a lofty point, richly grassed - some sort of volcanic intrusion of the kind that is often associated with the tops in the Northern Blue Mountains, but mostly we traversed a featurless spur, with stunted sandstone country vegetation.

Eleven thirtyish, we came to the rim above Wollemi Creek, and from one of the cliffy outcrops looked down on a small, discoloured stream winding between steep, but not sheer, walls. Perhaps half a mile down, through an almost imperceptible rift in the chewed-up landscape, the clear waters of the Capertee entered and we were looking down on the birth of the Colo.

Intrepid types would no doubt have been down in half an hour or so, for the total descent would not have been greatly over 1,200 feet, but we were a cautious party and worked down from shelf to shelf and level to level, while I sweated considerably, and once sent a cascade of small rubble down towards C and H in front of me. Then we were down on a bank of baked and cracked mud and drinking absurdly luke-warm water from the Wollemi.

The leader, who "had been there several times before", assured us there should be good cool clear water for lunch at the junction of Munai Creek coming in from the north west a few hundred yards downstream. Having located one puddle of yellow-grey mud, we drew from the earthy-looking, tepid Wollemi after

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all. Most of the party bathed in the large waterhole in the Wollemi close by, getting an involuntary mud-pack treatment up to the thighs in the process, and I idly recalled Johnny Bookluck once asseverating that Tasmanian mud clung under his toe nails for six months. Of course, that was before our Great Wade.

Forty minutes or so after lunch, and a bit over half a mile down the Wollemi, we came to the Capertee, and therefore, the Colo. (I still think the Colo should start five miles above, at the confluence of Wolgan and Capertee, but then, cartographers are highly irresponsible people.)

The Capertee, glory be, was warm and crystal clear, and only about six inches deep, flowing over an expanse of gritty yellow sand. It came out of a tortuous looking rift between stained and shaggy walls. It looked wild. I knew a little satisfaction at being in a spot where comparatively few walkers had gone, though only seventy miles from Sydney and about five or six hours walking time from a highway.

Another dip for those who wanted to, and the leader said we now had between four or five miles down river to cover. It may be necessary to do the lot that afternoon if we wanted a tolerable camp site. About three o'clock we moved, and I counted on my fingers; four miles, say, at a mile an hour, which should be good pace on the Colo. That made it seven pip emma and just on dark. But, said the leader, if a worthy camp site appeared after say, five o'clock, we'd take it.

I suppose we continued down the west bank of the Colo for half a mile or so: the gorge had closed in, and although the cliffs on each side were broken enough to offer endless scaling opportunities to the intrepid, they wouldn't be my cup of tea. The river itself was very well behaved, however, gliding its sinuous, shiny way only a few inches deep over its sandy bed. The banks we followed were rough, but not desperately so, and I remembered the Colo eleven years before and about fifteen miles lower down, and decided to agree with the opinion of Alex Colley in the October magazine that flooding and erosion higher up has eased the travail of walkers on the Colo, by comparison with earlier trips there.

I had been eyeing the gentle looking stream, and presently could bear it no more. Flinging away my reputation as a walker like a winter garment of repentance, I mumbled to H, who was nearest and would know what I meant, "I'm going to do a Green Wattle", and strode into and DOWN the centre of the Colo.

Very soon my sandshoes and socks filled with gravelly sand, so I peeled them off, put them dripping in the top of my pack, and splashed happily on, barefoot. At the first rough patch of bank, I outstripped the earth-bound party, and then H joined me.

Joyously we splashed and bounded along. D and then C followed suit. Here and there were unexpected, innocent-looking patches of quick sand, and in one stride you could be up to the knees, the thighs, the hips in three inches of water and one or two feet of sand with the consistency of porridge. Undeterred, we bowled noisily downstream, and presently even A and J, in whom tradition died hard, were sloshing and sinking and sloshing again. It became an accepted routine, after negotiating a particularly soggy or extensive strip of quick sand, to perch on a rock or sand bank and watch the tail wallow through, with some not-too-accurate shouted advice on the positions where the quick sand was quickest; and considerable ribald hilarity.

It couldn't go on indefinitely, of course, but it did for over two miles. And, in spite of frequent flounderings, we made fair time. We were most of us wet to the hips, of course, and a veneer of coarse damp sand clung to us. Then the river began to change. Pools appeared, and rocky barriers, and at times the intervals between wadeable patches of river were long enough to require the putting on of shoes. J, growing ashamed of the breach of traditional walker behaviour, forsook us for the bank; then the leader also, and presently came a pool so long I knew I too must abandon the Great Wade. So I had to wash the rubble out of my socks and when this was done, I was over five minutes behind the party. By going hard in the next half hour along banks that reminded me of the Grose below Wentworth Creek, I caught up at a halt, but as we moved on again, lack of condition crept up on me. By 5.50 I was lagging and wishing for another good wading patch. We crossed the river and - behold, the leader was striking up a scrubby bank to the foot of the talus slope. Not yet surely? But it was, and by six o'clock we were at the kind of camp site you sneer at on the Cox and applaud on the Colo. An hour up on schedule - the Great Wade had paid off.

The means of extricating ourselves from the gorge was at the outlet of Boorai Creek, just opposite, and when it began to drizzle under an overcast sky on Sunday morning, there was no real incentive to dwell by the river. About nine we started on the hill, stopped a time at the crest to go to the rim and look down into the ravine and across to Mount Barrakee, and heaven knows what else on the west, then struck off along the labyrinthine ridges again.

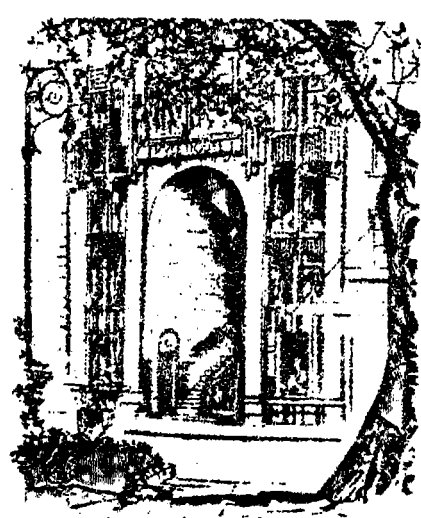
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Standard ridge walking, rejoining the trunk of the Culoul Range about three miles from the road, filled the rest of that day until at 3.15 we came again to the Land Rover.

Overall, and considering that we walked in one of the least frequented parts of coastal New South Wales, it was an entirely uneventful trip. Why, it wasn't even as rough as I'd expected, although still qualifying for "some of the roughest country in the State" (and no apologies to the local Press).

However, I believe some record should be made of the first wade down the Colo: and if sensitive walkers feel that our conduct is improper, I can only urge them to try the same journey at a time when the river is low and the sun is bright and warm - and see if their rectitude and love of rock hopping will carry them dry-shod where we splashed.

GUMBOOYA-INGA

GUMBOOYA-INGA

GUMBOOYA-INGA

SALAMI - CABERNOSSI - 54"

- "Liverwart"

So read the Christmas food list. Yes, unmistakeably, 54 inches, $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet, $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards, of sausage. Would it be unwound from a drum like a G.P.O. cable? No, a continuous sausage couldn't be stuffed. In fact - awful thought - was there a constant relationship between length and thickness. Cocktail sausages - $3" \times \frac{1}{2}"$; snags - $7" \times 1"$; Devon $1'-6" \times 3"$. Would a 54" one be six or eight times as long as it was thick? Would it be 7 - 9 inches through? Visions of boarding the tram wrestling with a truncated boa-constrictor, of staggering down the Kowmung with the monster draped over the top of a pack. Anyway, smallgoods shops didn't carry tape measures. Easy, take your own. How to find the reptile? Try the largest shop first. D.J.'s - never heard of it. McIlwraths - no, not their baby. Determined quest from shop to shop, tape measure in hot hand. Large blacks, wrinkled browns, fat reds, some in silver paper, some in cellophane! Straight ones, curved ones, long ones, short ones - no Cabernossi. Try the Continental shops. "Have you any Salami Cabernossi?" "Yes!" "Which is it?" "What, that!" (That caricature of a sausage - strings of $1'-6" \times \frac{1}{2}"$ - hardly a feed for a Jackass). "Yes, they are all like that." Obviously an authority. By the twinkle in the eye and the accent, an immigrant from the homeland of sausages. But however could seven walkers sustain themselves for four lunches on that elongated morsel? Make it six feet. "Two yards please," producing steel tape. Must find another specimen and check. Yes, there it was, nestling amongst its brothers from Hungary, Poland, Austria. Diameter $\frac{5}{8}"$. Rapid check with food party. Buy another $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Total length now $275\frac{1}{2}"$. Long trip, long sausage. Unravel the Cabernossi!

MORE FREE NIGHTS

The Committee Members (bless 'em) have been fully aware of the fact that on the Club nights when they meet in the inner sanctum to sagely deliverate on Club affairs, the "rank-and-file" members have been noticeably absent from the Club-room. The Committee (bless 'em again) also are fully cognisant of the great compliment thus paid them that the ordinary members regard the Club room so dull without the Committee's bright and pleasing personalities that they just don't come in!!

Be that as it may, the new Social Programme now in the hands of members will disclose that the first Wednesday of each month is now designated a "free night" with the hope that ordinary members will come in and make it a social evening among themselves (without the added attraction of the Committee) just as they do on other programmed "free nights". With a heavy entertainment programme on non-business nights, many complaints have been made that members do not get the opportunity to socialise and plan trips in the Club room, either because they are peering at colour transparencies in the dark, listening to our operatic stars or long-winded talks on this and/or that.

Tentative plans are afoot for such innovations as the provision of the projector in a darkened corner to allow the screening of sundry slides by those who don't have a projector at home. The Social Secretary would welcome suggestions for the unorganised entertainment or recreation of members on that night of the month (such as table tennis), so that those who want to have a quiet (or otherwise) natter can do so without the frustration of sitting up like Jacky in row upon row in the dark.

MY LOVE'S THE MOUNTAIN RANGE

- Dot Butler

"What takes you to the mountains every weekend", they asked.

"Listen", she said, "and I will tell you a story. This is a strange tale, half in and half out of the world, for it has to do with a life that is past and gone, yet is as truly present as today is. I shall never cease to wonder at the way the past colours the present.

It started when I was a little over a year old. Family circumstances took us from Sydney to Queensland where an exceptionally torrid summer, together with an epidemic of some description, so wasted the infant frame that my life was despaired of.

"You've got four more," said the doctor, a heavy man with a bull neck. "What are you complaining about. You can't expect to rear 'em all."

But my mother, with that unaccountable stubbornness mothers have, refused to give up hope. Every morning in the quiet grey silence before the dawn she would set out with me for the bush. We went early to avoid the heat of the day. From the top of the highest hill we would watch the sun arise in a glory of splendour. Trees would rustle with a cool stir in the soft dawn breeze as the world awoke.

"The world is very beautiful," my mother would say, wise brown eyes looking into infant eyes of a misty, unspeculative blue; "the moving whisper of great trees, the deep blue sky, the ripple of bird songs, the scented fairy flowers. You won't leave the world that loves you, Pani. It's a wonderful world to explore. You will grow up strong and beautiful as all the lovely natural things." ---and looking now at my mother, and now at the bush, the two became interwoven, and the life that was my mother became the life of the bush world. Then from out the shadowy softness of trees and bushes, little friendly faces showed, and a little man with eyes tender and kindly as a lover's smile beckoned to me -- "stay". So the little seed that was set took root and grow, and a shy and shadowy soul, wavering in uncertainty on the brink of two worlds, was won over to a play of light and shade, the whisper of leaf on leaf, the softness and colour of a butterfly's wing, the healthy virile smell of the good earth. Life was good, after all, and it decided to stay.

There were happy puppy days in the bright clear Queensland weather when the five little brothers and sisters lived and loved and laughed and were riotous in the sun. They danced and hunted through the bush, they lay sprawled on the hot, sun-dazzled earth, warm in the sun and delightfully cold in the shade, and watched white islands of cloud heap themselves pile on pile and fill the upper air with movement and colour; they speculated on the infinite blue of the sky as seen through the riot of green and silver which was the gum trees. There was the joy of responding to the strong vibration of the earth, of trying to unravel the myriad tiny noises that made up a noise, and who can explain the deep soul-satisfying joy a child knows on feeling the silky-soft dust of the white road go puff between bare toes, or in squelching knoc-deop through the thick black mud of the tidal mangrove creeks. In the trees were koala bears to be enticed with gum leaves, and if you stayed in the bush when the sun had gone down, you might be lucky enough to see a 'Possum.

When I was five we came south again to live at Epping. Still the friendly grey-green bush was all around, and sometimes it was all splashed and painted with gold. On these days when the wattle bloomed, a child could wander through the perfect sweetness of a world of green and gold, permeated with a wild-honey smell, and become friendly with the horny, clinging splinter-pullers on the wattle bark, and the iridescent beetles that get in your hair, lifting their wing-cases and saying "p-s-s-s" in strident defiance when you tried to pull them off.

There were days of hot, singing silence, and days when the locusts droned deafeningly through the pulsating air. If they ceased suddenly it was as though life had been snapped in the middle.

Some time about my tenth birthday we went to live on the western line, in a place of great, wide paddocks which stretched and rolled away as far as the eye could see. All around was a blue perimeter of sky, but over there where the sun went down, standing out in bold permanence against the sky, rose the mountains of the West, of a more entrancing, beckoning blue. How we children longed to go there! What stories we wove about the great hills and greater valleys where the golden air drifted lazily in deep silent gorges walled in by tall gaunt ranges - where the dingos howled at night beneath a sky freckled with stars, and quiet, round-eyed things prowled through the growth and sniffed in the dark. Oh, the vastness of it! The solitude and the mystery!

Of course it was great fun to play down in the creek-bed near home where the ti-trees danced all in green and white, and the brown flood sang along between mossy banks rich in unexpected fungoid treasures of orange and purple, whites and browns and reds. It would act as a palliative for a time, and the insistence of the still small voice urging us to the mountains would be somewhat dulled, but in my mind a faint pain would remain to haunt me when alone.

Early one Autumn morning when the wind bore a scent of other worlds - urgent, tantalizing, prickling with adventure - and life coursed like a white-gold fire through our veins, we set out across the windy paddocks, following the long streamers of cloud streaking across the infinite expanse of blue, pointing straight to the mountains. We walked a long time. The wind dropped, the sun rose to the mid-sky and the hot hush of noon lay over a sleeping world, and we, too, lay down and slept. And in that half trance, which is the state between sleeping and waking, the doors separating this world from the next opened. I rose up and left my companions, and in a rainbow mist I entered the Shadow Land - the domain of the Little People. Here, out of the corner of one eye, which is not the eye of day, you might catch a fleeting glimpse of an odd little man, his clothes as dun coloured as the trunks of the trees, gazing from under beetling brows, and beckoning, beckoning towards the mountains with a laugh on his lips and a twinkle in his cider-coloured eyes. But it would be useless to stop and call to him, "I remember you, little man. Take me with you ..." because when you looked at him he would not be there, or only a dead bush would be standing there with its branchy arms akimbo, and the laugh and chuckle you heard might not be anything but the dead bark rattling against the trunk

Even as I looked, the colours blurred, the light faded and the shade of evening closed in. The mountains softly withdrew into the dark hollow of night and a little evening zephyr fanned the scented air.

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I don't remember how we got home, but for a long time afterwards I went round in a brown haze of reminiscence, and when I looked I looked with but half an eye, and when I listened I listened with but half an ear, like one who has been bewitched, and indeed I was, for the Little Man of the Mountains had cast his spell over me, and I knew that the bush and the mountains formed part of the heart of me for ever.

However, the mountains still remained far away. School work and suburban interests filled by days till, at the age of 19, a wonderfully new and exciting world opened to me. I joined up with the happy, friendly company of people whose hearts belong to the deep solitudes of the bush, the rugged sun-kissed ridges and the shining watercourses. Together we go out into quiet places, and at odd moments we may catch a glimpse of a little fleeting form from the Shadow Land, and as we lie by the camp-fire at night, watching the red sparks fly upwards in a rush of light towards the cold white radiance of the stars, a deep peace steals over us in the realization that we have at last come home."

WANTED

WANTED

WANTED

A powerful wolf-cry capable of being heard at least one half mile away. Owner/s required to give genuine wolf-calls from a hilltop at hourly intervals or as otherwise needed in the coming GUMBOOYA-INGA.

Watch Notice Board for auditions.

WEEKEND AT HOME

- "Bull Moose"

I've had my meals all cooked for me
 And breakfast late in bed;
 A bath that took two hours -
 The papers all I've read.

I've overeaten grossly,
 I'm not the slightest tired.
 It seems so very long ago
 The last time I perspired.

There's music in the lounge room,
 A drink - an easy chair;
 An atmosphere that's heated
 By flowing dustfree air.

I've had my full 8 hours' sleep,
 And as the doctor said:
 "There's nothing like a proper rest
 To soothe an aching head".

The softness of these moccasins
 Is comfort, heaven knows.
 I slip them gently from my feet
 And work my battered toes.

No walking this weekend,
 I should feel good, but gee,
 This resting's not so easy
 For cripes, it's killing me.

JOTTINGS OF A BULL MOOSE

Did you read this news item? "Baby walks at six months on Terry's Meal."

Thinks - Quieter than Cornflakes anyway.

Applied Psychology

Who was the attractive unknown lady walker who remarked to her friend while standing in a crowded train, "I wish that strong good-looking chap would offer me his seat, I'm so tired".

Immediately six men jumped to their feet.

Overheard

"I can't understand her. I think it must be drink."

"Bad luck, you should try when you're sober."

The Walkers' Philosophy

He is no walker who to the ground
Can fall and lie without a sound.

But he is walker who, with a smile,
Can rise and push another mile.

Even the best of family trees has its saps and suckers.

Dorothy Fix (or is it Mix)

My advice to the venturesome girl who finds it difficult to resist the well worn paths and the attractive invitations from men bushwalkers is "don't".

Darling I'm Getting Older Dept.

"If you take the height of Mt. Jook (12,406 ft.) from the height of Mt. Everest, what's the difference?"

"What's the difference, that's what I say - they're both too high for me now."

Sailor Beware

Would you say the flirting girl at the yacht club was contemplating witchcraft?

The Skindiver

Ignore this element awhile,
Dive deep and glide a rocky aisle,
Cool and still, yet fair to see -
Behold the wonders of the sea.
And in a world where fishes fly
Forgot that earth is slave to sky.

WOMBEGAN CAVES

The Ranger at Wombegyan Caves has stated that the people with whom he has the most trouble are those known as bushwalkers. Mr. Stiff has stated that he realises that the body of people mentioned are of a very independent mind, but would like to point out that it is illegal to enter any cave in the reserve (and there are no caves worth entering which are not in the reserve) which require any type of artificial light. Members are asked to note this point and co-operate with the ranger, who you will find is quite a reasonable bloke. However, he will also be found to be quite zealous in his job!

A LETTER FROM MICK ELFICK

I read in the November mag. that people expected me to depart with my battered overnight bag only. Well, despite the hinderance of about 40 million part time soldiers, who decided to prance about the streets, and the encumbrance of a certain female, who decided she wanted to buy a camera, I managed to purchase a monstrous, useless, hopeless suitcase, but forgot the essentials - shirt on which ties will fit, tie, etc.

Naturally, I did take my little blue bag with me. It was chock-a-block with text books (weighed about 42 lb. 6 oz.) and needless to say, I didn't check it in at the airport office.

First thing I did in Hobart was to hurl the big, useless, hopeless, monstrous suitcase under Manning's bed and leave it there. Since then I haven't hit Hobart or seen Manning or F.H. and they've moved, so I haven't a clue where my big case is. However, me and my little blue bag have roamed the countryside, and since I've had little time to buy substitute gear, it is invaluable.

However, I am beginning to think that my little blue bag is nearing the end of its economic life - maintenance costs in needles and cotton are high and it may soon need a new zip, but with a few modifications it should have years of life yet.

I've been walking for a few years now, but most trips have been all male "you'll be left behind if you don't keep up" type, with a few occasional mixed walks, a la Ettrema trip last Easter.

Now I've strayed into a new field. Imagine the party - Elfick and two females (Evelyn and Ruve) - on a six day loaf through the Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair Reserve.

First I might as well explain how this came about. Since I've been working an average of six days a week since arrival, I suddenly found myself with seven working days which I could take off and still get paid for - so I knocked off work on 16th December. Now, since I finished up at Launceston, the simplest thing to do was to walk back fia the Reserve, and by a mere "coincidence" Ruve and Evelyn were going south at the same time - hence the team.

Now for the sorry? tale. We set forth in typical Tasmanian weather at about 8.00 a.m. By 8.30 it was snowing in a horizontal direction and by 9.00 a.m. we were frozen, so we stopped at Kitchen Hut. The weather didn't improve so we stayed put, only venturing outside to either view the dismal white scene or gather hunks of wild rhubarb to "burn"? or both.

Next day the snow was only coming down at about 30° to the ground, so we three intrepid souls made a wild rush for the next hut.

The weather and schedule for the next few days was similar and as follows:-

1. Arise when it is beginning to look a bit light - generally 9.00 - 9.30 a.m.
2. 10.00 a.m. breakfast cooked by the girls (chiz).
3. 11.00 a.m. push off in a rush.
4. 1.00 - 2.00 arrive at next hut wet and/or frozen.
5. 3.00 p.m. sufficiently thawed/dried out to start tea.
6. 4.00 - 8.00 tea cooked by girls (chiz).

We did see a bit between the wildly fleeing clouds, and the mountains seen through the wild weather seemed even more formidable and impressive. The waterfalls were beaut - plenty of water in them.

By the time we reached Windy Ridge the bad weather had blown itself out and from Narcissus to Cynthia Bay was great - real N.S.W. type weather. To celebrate, we trotted up to Byron Gap (uphill at an average 3 m.p.h. - who said girls can't walk).

However, I'd better tell you of a few traps laid for charlies like me so you can warn any others who are in a similar position. (1) I was told "you go first since you will set a good pace etc." - what rot, but the leader does fall into the most bogs and get the most mud! (2) At Narcissus Evelyn trots in, towel in hand, saying "Gee that swim was great". Out thunders Elfick, towel in hand, determined not to be outdone by a female. After a lot of effort he manages to get wet all over, but nearly dies of cold in the process. On returning learns that Evelyn didn't get past a quick wash of the hands and face before succumbing to the cold! Oh the cunning of the female! Nevertheless, the treatment I received to bring me back to life just about made up for the pain. (3) Finally, watch out for this secret female-type weapon - the tiny flimsy handkerchief. If a billy was boiling over, I'd reach out with a stick to get it off, the stick would break and I'd curse and look for another stick. Meanwhile, a small-type hand, protected only by one of these flimsy cloth devides, would flit in, save the tea from destruction and be back out of danger before I could even see another stick!

Still, despite the weather etc., it was a great trip - I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

When we all arrived at the flat, there was bedlam. Imagine five bush-walkers in a 2½ room flat, cooking, packing and unpacking all at once. When it was time to sleep, you literally cleared a space with your feet and laid down, if possible.

Then the girls decided to do some of their "washing". The eyes of the old girl who lives upstairs nearly popped out of her head - I can imagine what the old ducks are saying. "I thought John and Barry were nice boys, but since this rough chap from the H.E.C. has arrived, tut - tut - tut!"

Every time Ruve or Evelyn or myself say hello, all they do is to turn round and chuckle!

16.

Anyhow, I now have a week's solitary confinement here to straighten things up before the mob returns. I made a great discovery tonight after a lot of work - the floor is covered with linoleum and underneath my left foot is a patch which is a definite green colour. Perhaps we have a green lino floor! I must get to work and find out!

All the best.

Michael Elfick.

P.S. We (the H.E.C.) go to the West Coast on 6th January to work on the King River Gorge and Pieman River, so I should see a bit of the S.W. then - especially if we get our 'copter back.

P.P.S. For heavens sake don't publish this!

SWIMMING CARNIVAL 1959

This year's Swimming Carnival will be held on the weekend of 14th and 15th February at Lake Eckersley, a wide sandy bend of the Woronora River, approached from Heathcote Station by an easy walk of about 2½ miles, mostly along an unused Water Board Road. The official train is the 12.50 p.m. on Saturday, whilst the day walk will be on the 8.50 a.m. Sunday train. Those coming out on the Sunday are asked to make haste as the programme is a full one. Cups of tea will be waiting on arrival!

There are two annual trophies to be won - the Henley Memorial Cup for the highest point score, and the Mandelberg Cup for the mixed relay handicap race. It will be interesting to see if Georgina Langley can retain the Henley Memorial Cup. Will another star come to light?

The main events will be:-

Men's Open Championship
Women's Open Championship
Men's Breaststroke
Women's Breaststroke
Mixed Relay Race
Long Plunge - Gents & Ladies
Underwater Contest
Peanut Scramble

The point score is decided on the open races, breaststroke races and the long plunge. The "Long Plunge" consists of running down a sandy bank, landing like a torpedo and floating without arm or leg movement as far as the breath will last. No snorkels please. Good campfire Saturday night. Prospective members and visitors welcome to compete but of course cannot score points or win places. Bring your new Song Books.

GUMBOOYA-INGA

GUMBOOYA-INGA

GUMBOOYA-INGA

It is a much used saying that "truth is stranger than fiction", and maybe it is too, but I am inclined to believe that there is an intermediate stage that is perhaps truth and perhaps fiction and perhaps stranger than either of them. At least I must admit it is more fun to write. The following episode falls into this category. It was originally written for publication in an outside magazine where the characters aren't so wellknown as they are to us, so this will account for some of the liberties taken. Now read on

SIX FEET UNDER THE EARTH

- "Scraggy"

Now speliology (or cave exploring) is a subject on which I delight to let my hair down because I've done quite a bit of it and haven't enjoyed it very much. Why do I go at all? Ah! well you see, Grace is very keen.

I think one of the most humorous things about caving is to hear the performance of someone caught in a "squeezehole", providing of course you are not following them through. A squeezehole is a small, often tiny, passage of varying length that connects caverns underground. These passages must have been a tight fit even on the water which originally formed them and yet, for a certain intrepid cavers, they provide what could almost be described as a fatal attraction.

One such 6'-6" explorer, known to his friends for irrelevant reasons as "The Admiral", was almost fatally attracted to a squeezehole in the Mammoth Cave at Jenolan. Personally, I can't believe that this particular hole was worn by anything but an intoxicated spirit because in its 25 ft. length it performs every contortion known to geometry, except the corkscrew. It begins with a straight slit 12" wide, goes into a backward 'U' bend, develops into a forward 'S' bend and finishes with fishhook and keyhole. This may sound uncomfortable, but let me assure you no description can convey the feeling of discomfort inspired when one is actually stuck!

Now the Admiral's first mistake was to take up caving at all - he's just not built for it, but more to the point in question, his mistake was to enter the 12" slit entrance of the squeeze on his left side instead of his right. So it was he encountered a minor setback right at the beginning when he found that his spine just wouldn't bend backwards sufficiently to fit the 'U' bend. He passed this information forward and was in no way relieved by the hilarity.

"You'll have to get through, Admiral, you're holding up half the party!" Muffled mirth.

"But I tell you I just don't bend that way!"

"Can you get on to your other side then?"

With a tremendous clatter of hobnails and laboured grunts, the Admiral sought to rotate himself in the confined space.

"Watch out Admiral!" complained Bev, who was right behind him. "You nearly got my teeth then!"

At last, with a final grunt and sigh, the Admiral announced, "I've done it, I think."

"What do you mean you think?"

"Well, my feet are still facing the other way".

"Never mind them. They'll come with the rest of you".

As you may imagine, the sound of even heavy breathing in such a confined space is considerable, but when it's a matter of grunting, puffing, panting and kicking hobnailed boots against hard limestone, the din is deafening.

All these sounds we heard (together with some muffled curses) as the Admiral progressed around the 'U' bend. He'd just got his feet back facing the same way as his head, and his head and shoulders were moving into the second part of the 'S' bend, when he discovered that his feet weren't following him. In fact, his legs from the knee down seemed to be just too long to fit round into the 'S' bend. He experimented with a few different angles and succeeded in getting one leg jammed with the knee in a hollow in the floor and his foot hooked somehow on the roof.

"Er, Bev, can you see my right foot?"

"Yes, it's there Admiral."

"I know it's there! But can you see why it wont come down from the roof?"

"That's your left foot on the roof."

"What! Are you sure you're looking at my feet?!"

"Size eleven."

"Must be. I suppose I got them muddled when they were facing the other way. Well, can you get it unstuck, whichever it is!"

"Hang on, I'll try."

There was a pause while Bev manouvered into a better position, then came the sound of blows interspersed with cries from the Admiral.

Thud! "Ow!" Thud! "Ouch!" Thud! "Hey!! What are you getting it out with?!"

I'm trying to knock it out with my rock hammer, but it wont come. I'll have to take off your boot. Hang on."

"Hang on! Where do you think I'd go."

While Bev laboured to remove the boot, the carbide lamp at the other end of the Admiral, which had been flickering for a time, finally went out, leaving him in darkness. With more muffled curses, the Admiral decided to rectify this because, quite apart from being in the dark, the acetylene gas, no longer burning, kept leaking into the atmosphere and while it wasn't dangerous, it smelt vile. The matches, of course, were in his overalls pocket and as he was lying on his right arm, he couldn't use that, so after much labour he got his left arm down near the matches just as Bev removed the boot.

"Right! Off you go Admiral!"

"I can't. I'm not ready yet!"

"Not ready!! You do nothing but lay there while I wait on you hand and foot and then you're not ready!"

"But my light's gone out!"


"What do you need a light for? You can't get lost."

So it was that the Admiral was talked into proceeding with one boot on, both arms by his side and his light out. Of course he didn't get more than a foot before the leg with the boot on got caught, and by this time his shoulders were also jammed and the lamp was leaking acetylene right under his nose.

I wont bore you with the rest of the story. Enough to say that the Admiral extricated himself with the greatest alacrity when Bev accidentally? left her carbide lamp playing against his overalls and set them on fire.

STOP PRESS


"The roughest country in the State" is usually discovered by the press on the Tuesdays following long weekends. It is located wherever the lost hikers happen to be and descriptions of it help fill the spaces between the advertisements and reports of accidents. But the S.M.H., in an intrepid sortie to the North on the weekend of 7th and 8th December, located it on the Hawkesbury, where the new power line is being laid.

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HAVE YOU FOUND YOUR CAR A TRIAL?

--_0_o_o_--

If not, this may be just what you're looking for !!

--_0_o_o_--

The 1959 S.B.W. CAR TRIAL to be hell'd on the last weekend of February.

--_0_o_o_--

PADDY MADE

FOOTWEAR

The walking season for 1959 is fast approaching and for those once again thinking of NEW FOOTWEAR, we wish to announce a new shipment of Commando Soles has just arrived and we have placed further orders for boots to be made up with these soles fitted. Our last shipment sold out very quickly.

These boots are becoming more and more popular as the more cautious buyer learns from a new owner of their versatility and makes the plunge !!

Just to refresh your memory, these boots have the following special features:-

Commando Sole stuck and brass-screwed to solid double butt leather sole.

High-quality chrome-tanned uppers all sewn with double waxed thread and triple stitched at vital points.

All soles fitted the full length of the boot.

In all, an article of footwear to take a lot of hard punishment and give reliable service.

PRICE PER PAIR - £5. 5. 0. Colours - Black or Tan.

ANOTHER NEW LINE IN FOOTWEAR

Special miners' socks but much-improved heavier quality than previously - so replace those worn socks now - at 8/6d per pair !!!

JUST ARRIVED

Full range of carabiners just arrived - priced from 9/9 to 27/6d.

PADDY PALLIN
Lightweight Camp Gear
201 CASTLEREAGH ST SYDNEY