

ON MCALISTER SADDLE

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers, Box 4476 G.P.O., Sydney, 2001. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening from 7.45 pm at the Cahill Community Centre (Upper Hall), 34 Falcon Street, Crow's Nest.

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A QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY EXPERIENCE IN THE WEST BUDAWANGS
WITH CHERNOBYL CAPON.

by Bob Younger.

At around midnight on the Friday heralding the Queen's birthday weekend, twelve of Bill Capon's cortege mostly gathered in the car park adjoining the start of the new access track which skirts the northern boundary of Wog Wog Station. The majority had come via Braidwood and Mongarlowe to avoid the coastal traffic and take advantage of sealed roads most of the way.

Saturday morning revealed the following who were almost ready to move off at the stipulated hour of 0730:- Barbara Bruce, Carol Bruce, Bill Capon, Fusae Dargan, Ray Dargan, "Rick" King, Jim Laing, Gordon Lee, Bob Milne, Bob Niven, Christine Scott, Rosalind Tayler, Bob Younger. Fifteen minutes later the party started along a well-defined foot-track towards the beautiful cone of Corang Peak. After the windy ascent of this wonderful object, a quick survey for the best approach to Freeman Creek led us to a steep and rocky slope.

Bill ordered us to sit down and enjoy our morning tea full knowing that we would not linger in such an uncomfortable spot. And so it proved, because the party soon decided to follow Bill downhill in a most undisciplined fashion. This led to the headwaters of Canowie Brook, lush grasses and boggy ground. Further upstream we crossed the watershed into the beginning of Freeman Creek.

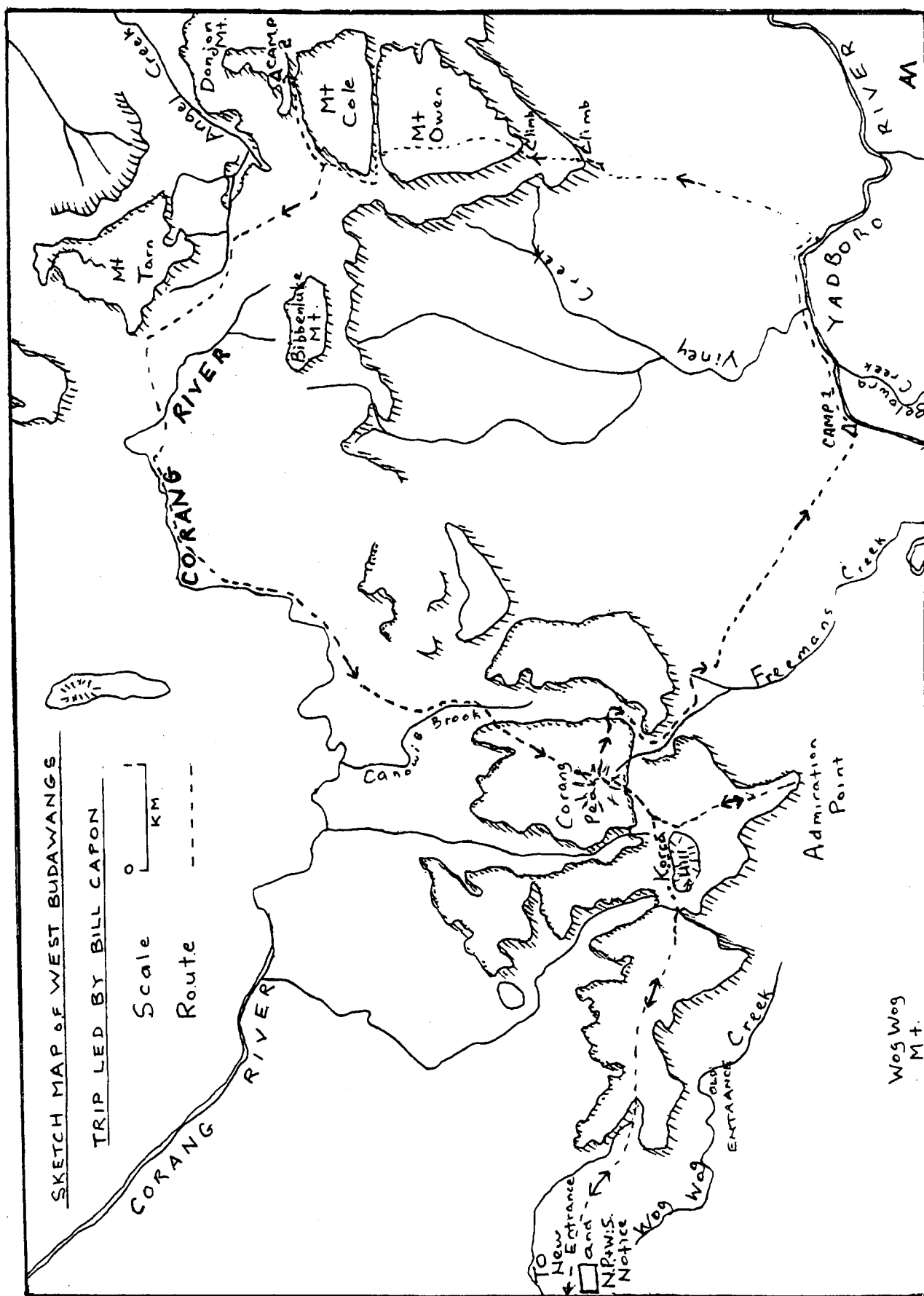
Bill and Bob had poked about here on previous occasions and had found many places where it was not possible to gain access. We must have been lucky this time, for it was not long before the party was sliding and stumbling downstream through dampness and decay until lunch time.

After lunch the creek became steep and narrow with cliffs on either side. We hopped, crawled and slid around large moss-covered boulders and over uninviting drops. "Rick" was detailed off to scout the left-hand cliff, Jim and Gordon were sent down the creek and Bill reconnoitered the right-hand side. The creek proved to be too steep to manage and we thought we could be stuck for the night. Then Rick returned with the welcome news that he had found a narrow passage along the base of the cliff which would probably get us out of our predicament. This proved to be the case and, apart from Jim who was still trying to escape from the depths of the gorge, we were soon happily walking down a long ridge which would take us to the Yadboro River and a good campsite.

It was here that Bill came within a whisker of once again achieving a melt down with his latest aluminium billy. "You need to have cooling water," we said, dubbing him CHERNOBYL CAPON and recommending that he should buy steel vessels in future. Modest toasts to Her Majesty were proposed and consumed prior to us drifting off to scattered tents.

Sunday morning, and it was not long before we were making good speed along a bridle path towards the Belowra Creek junction. Bill had previously been unable to find the continuation of the track at this spot and told us that progress from here on would be slow. Not so! Carol stepped across the river, through the bushes right onto the path.

The next objective was to pick up another track leading towards a ridge up to the southernmost tip of Mt. Owen. Another pleasant surprise. Where a dubious foot-track had been expected we found a well maintained fire trail/four-wheel-drive road. (It looked like another bicentenary project.) This made the extremely steep climb up to the base of the first



cliff line more acceptable. In fact the more senior members were wont to entertain the youngsters with their repertoire of old jokes, but they come in handy every so often.

The grade eventually became too much for the four-wheel-drivers so we scrambled up to the base of the cliff and perched there in the chilly wind, all huddled together, taking shelter as best we could. The scouts were out again to find a way up through this fearsome barrier. Some signs of previous human passage along a narrow ledge and up through a steep slot were visible. The party split into two manageable groups and ropes were secured to sturdy shrubs to assist the would be alpinists. The second group sheltered from the debris generated by the efforts of those above to achieve some solid grip to assist their struggles.

With everyone now over the first giant step an early lunch seemed to be a good idea. We could admire the magnificent panoramic view and search for the way up through the second step. This appeared to be even more difficult than the first but there was a sort of transverse slot in the otherwise forbidding cliff face protecting Mount Owen from would be invaders. Verbal information received and memories of previous expeditions by individuals were recalled whilst the water we carried up was boiled in communal billies.

A foot track heading towards the slot was discovered. We followed it until another near vertical cleft brought the rock climbing fraternity to the fore to scout ahead. Again ropes were fastened for use by the faint hearted.

The cold wind sent us scampering across the flat table top of Mount Owen whilst we debated the choice of camp sites available, one well away from possible trespassers upon our eclectic seclusion. Earlier we had come across a self-styled "Commercial Operator" leading a group, all newly shod in walking boots. Couldn't camp anywhere near them!

Wine skins were filled once again and loaded into rucksacks. An elevated cave on Donjon Mountain had been selected by more or less popular choice. What an enjoyable evening we had. The fire reflected off the wind-carved walls of the cave and stars gradually appeared above the bulk of Mount Tarn to the west. A wind added to our sense of security, safe in our stronghold, while we drifted off to sleep in the dwindling incandescence of the fire.

Monday morning and another early start towards the Corang River and Conglomerate Slope. Water was carried to an elevated lunch spot and billies boiled. Some left their packs for a quick dash out to Admiration Point before returning to the cars.

Braidwood, Bungonia or Nowra were chosen as the way home, depending upon one's prognosis concerning the holiday traffic likely to be encountered on each route.

Here's to Her Majesty and here's to Chernobyl for leading the apprehensive across such magnificent country!

* * * * *

NEW MEMBERS. Please add the following names to your List of Members:-

FISHER, Jim - 37 Rosedale Road, Gordon, 2072	Phone 498 3195
MITCHELL, Alan - 9/147 Smith Street, Summer Hill, 2130	799 8550
WOLFE, Ian - 27 Glen Road, Roseville, 2069	46 3474

THE SNOW BOWL.

by Frank Rigby.

We stood on the summit of the mountain, the six of us: Margaret, Christine, Joan, Bob, Don and myself. The visible world to every horizon was made of wilderness, ridge beyond ridge, peak beyond peak, the deep valleys between barely sensed in that vast landscape of dominating heights. Here and there a small lake shimmered in the sun while the forests and grassy slopes shared the gentler land the countains could spare. There was, perhaps, even a surfeit of natural beauty.

The afternoon was advancing and my thoughts, as leader, turned to the more mundane question of finding a campsite for the evening. The chances were not bright. The route ahead along the crest of the range looked similar to that which we had already traversed: rugged, rocky, stark, treeless and completely dry, difficult although exciting to walk but impossible to camp.

I can't remember who saw it first but suddenly we were all looking with some interest. Just a short distance away, below the summit, the boulder-strewn crest cradled a small basin whose floor was covered by a bright green carpet. Silvery threads wove meandering ways across the carpet. What made the basin seem so improbable, yet so inviting, was the unrelenting harshness of its lifeless surroundings. To me, even at that distance, the place looked so enchanting that I would not have been surprised if a troupe of fairies had made a dainty entrance while I watched.

We hurried down off the summit, perhaps worrying whether such a pleasant and unexpected vision could possibly exist in reality. And why had we not heard of it before from walkers who had previously passed this way? But the basin was indeed real even if the fairies failed to materialise. The green carpet resolved into a dense grassy sward of fine lawn length and quality, admittedly damp in some places but eminently campable in others. The floor of the basin was dotted here and there with shallow tarns connected by narrow serpentine channels of flowing crystal-clear water. And here was another strange thing: there was no outlet for all this flowing water, at least no conventional outlet. At the lowest point of the basin the water simply disappeared into a hole in the ground, never to be seen again. From whence the water originated was also something of a mystery because the rocky rim seemed utterly dry.

Of course it was not really a snow bowl at all, not when we were there in that late December. In truth there was but one snowdrift still defying the summer sun. But in my imagination I tried to visualise the palce as it would surely be in winter; and I saw a saucer-shaped bowl half-filled with the purest virgin snow. The surface would be unblemished because no human being would dare to approach that rugged mountain fastness in that season; the terrain and the climate would protect this sanctuary from even the hardest adventurers.

After three small tents had been erected I climbed to the rim to observe the effect. Somehow, the tents did not degrade the scene, rather they seemed to belong. To me they symbolised the temporary presence of intelligent and receptive beings who could appreciate Nature's masterpiece. I suppose I was reminded of the night sky when the stars are brilliant - would it be quite the same if there were no one to gaze up in wonder?

Although some sort of a fire would have been possible with the small twisted branches of the heath around the edges, we determined not to light one because its remains would have left a scar. Indeed, there was not the slightest evidence that anyone had ever camped there before, at least not for a long time. Instead, we cooked on stoves until Christine called us over to the south-west side of the bowl. As if our campsite were not enough, Nature now proceeded to mount a display I shall never forget.

The sunset seemed to go on and on as if reluctant to shed its glory. I would guess that, from the first tinge of gold to the final fiery red, a full hour must have elapsed. Perhaps that is not surprising in those southern latitudes at midsummer. But it was not just the sky that held our breath; the landscape below more than played its part. From our lofty perch, the tiers upon tiers of peaks and ridges, ever changing with light and colour, formed a superb foreground.

According to Nature's law there is a serpent in every paradise. In our Snow Bowl he proved to be the mosquitoes, but this was a small price to pay. Another potential serpent could be its partial exposure to the south-west from which so much nasty weather in these parts originates. Fortunately for us, we had no cause to worry during our one-night stay.

It is now more than six years since we stumbled upon the Snow Bowl. I have not been back. I hesitate in case it is not the same in which case my memories would collapse in ruins. Have uncaring human beings marred its pristine beauty? Has Nature herself, in some cataclysmic mood, altered it beyond my recognition? I do not know and I may never know.

I wonder if that's the way it ought to be.

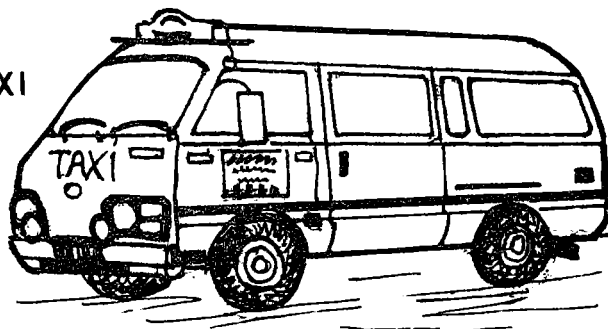
Author's Note:

The Snow Bowl is a real place in an Australian national park. Perhaps some readers may guess its location; perhaps others do not want to know, preferring instead to imagine it to be wherever they wish. I hope that my companions of December 1979, four of whom were, and still are, S.B.W. members, retain happy memories of a shared experience in a very special place.

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Conservation Corner

by Ainslie Morris.

WOODCHIPPING:

Three more areas in Tasmania come up for the chop this summer. They are below the Hartz Mountains and along the Huon Valley. The Wilderness Society, the ACF and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust plan "peaceful direct action" this summer.

Harris Daishowa have applied for areas in Gippsland which would bring their total concession up to one million hectares. A license has been issued for the production of 250,000 cubic metres of woodchips in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland.

GARDENS OF STONE:

This area near Lithgow is between the Wollemi National Park and the road to Mudgee.

Mr. Carr has advised that the area proposed for national park reservation is unacceptable as such because of the impact of mining on surface environments and the commitment to the supply of mining timber. For these reasons the proposal is considered "neither feasible nor practical". These considerations do not apply to the whole area and efforts are continuing to have the remaining lands added to the park and the escarpment protected. Mr. Gabb, Minister for Natural Resources, says that the major rock features will be protected.

POINT PIPER-MARULAN POWER LINE:

Several preferred routes for this new line have been submitted by Elcom's consultants. One of them passes through the western edge of Kanangra-Boyd National Park and efforts are being made to have the line constructed on a route well to the west of existing and proposed parks.

COLO DAMS:

See General Meeting Report.

"DON'T SPOIL THE ROYAL":

Our Royal National Park must be the most walked in of all areas by S.B.W. members. In the "Program of Walks, November 1928 - June 1929" - the first printed program - there were 18 walks in the Royal including the Xmas Camp, Dec. 22nd to Jan. 2nd at Burning Palms. Much of early S.B.W. history is tied up with adding this area to the Park. (How do we know? The early Club Minute books were recently found in a cupboard and our oldest member had the Program. These could form part of our archives - but that's another story.)

The letter from "The Friends of the Hacking River" just goes to show that nothing is sacrosanct. Let the Editor or a member of the Committee know what you think - and feel! Editor. (See page 14)

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WETLANDS

THEIR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE.

- (1) Lismore - 13th September '86.
- (2) Bateman's Bay - 27th September '86.

\$25 - It is necessary to register.

For details contact Total Environment Centre, phone 27 4714 or Ainslie Morris.

LOST IN THE BUSH.

(This letter is a contribution from a non-member, but as it vividly describes "being lost", I felt it would be appreciated by our readers. Ed.)

Robert William French

1913 - 1973

Born London, England.

R. W. French (camp cook)
C/- Dept. of Works,
Alice Springs. N.T.
Sunday 28.7.68.

Hallo Heather,

Well everything is very still and quiet. Except for the dog and myself the camp is deserted, and apart from the aboriginals in their settlement about 15 miles away, there may be nobody within a couple of hundred miles. The sun is quite warm but the wind - not too strong - is fresh. The dog belongs to the foreman of the team of workers. There is something of the dingo in him, but he is a sturdy, friendly, bushwise animal.

For the first time for a week I have taken my warm clothing (I have only one set of warm stuff) off, and it's now in the tub soaking prior to being washed. I must get it done and dried before the sun goes down, and put it on again. Also - the first time for a week, I shall have a bath. That is if the wind does not come up too cold.

I mentioned before, the washing and toilet facilities were somewhat primitive. Actually no toilet arrangement exists. A body just goes bush. The shower is a four gallon drum hoisted up by a piece of rope. I guess you can imagine the routine. It's rather killing going to the toilet at night. I had to roll my dressing gown, and a few items of clothing to make a pillow - only a mattress is supplied by the Works Dept. It would be worse to untie my pillow and have to tie it up again before getting back into bed - than going straight from bed into the icy wind and getting back again as soon as possible. Fortunately I asked about bedding before I left Alice Springs - so I did get blankets.

I have just returned from getting my washing on the line. There is a stiff breeze blowing so it should be dry in a couple of hours or so.

Last Saturday, late in the afternoon I took the dog for a walk in the bush. I intended to be away only about 30 or 45 minutes, as the sun was going down then, and I did not intend at any time to lose sight of the caravans. There are only a few trees in the vicinity of the camp site, although the underbrush is quite thick. I also took note that, as I walked my shadow was cast directly on my right hand side. And so we walked out, turning every three or four minutes to make sure the caravans were still in view. Then came the time when they were obscured by trees, and could not be seen. This meant I just had to walk back the way I had come for 3 or 4 minutes, with the sun casting my shadow on my left side. But, unfortunately, it did not work out that way.

I was in very thick bush, and fairly tall trees, all heavy with foliage and I could not see more than a few yards in any direction. I climbed a tree, but all I could see was thick bush - and no trace of the fairly clear area surrounding the campsite. It was then I became rather concerned. I knew I was bushed. But I also knew I could not be far from the camp or the road. And as the camp is only about 40 yards or so off the road, if I could find the road, I would soon locate the caravans. So I looked around for a landmark which could possibly give me some direction, and also listened for the sound of cars.

Away in the distance a range of hills with a distinctive shape stirred my memory. I had an idea I had seen them as I was being brought into camp. If I was right, I had seen the hills on my left hand side while we were on

the road, and we had turned off the road on the right hand side to come into the camp which indicated the road should be between me and those hills. So off I went, as hard as I could get through the bush, to reach the road before dark. As I reckoned, that gave me about 30 minutes. It was just half past five o'clock then, I was wearing only a singlet and shirt and shorts, and it was getting quite cold with a rising wind. I also realised the men would not return to camp before the small hours of Monday morning. Which meant, if I did not find the camp I should be out all Saturday night, Sunday, Sunday night, and Monday morning until such time as I was found.

Assuming of course the men realised I had gone bush and got lost. There was of course the hope I should reach the road before dark, and be back in camp within an hour or so. Yes, I really pushed through the bush, and the further I went the thicker it became. It must have been during this period I received many of the lighter scratches and lacerations on my legs. There was also the problem that for much of the time the hills were obscured from sight. And when this happens it is impossible to keep direction.

Well, I found no road, not even a human track or tyre mark, and I heard no vehicles, and it was just about dark. I knew I had had it - for that night at any rate. Just hope for the best for tomorrow. And make a fire, collect plenty of timber and make a fire quickly. Plenty of timber to last all night. In about 10 minutes of semi-darkness I collected quite a pile of dead trees and branches then found I had only 6 matches (thank God I smoke), and if I was going to be out the next night could not afford to waste one. I lit my fire with my handkerchief which was quite dry, and which I knew would flame from one match if well sheltered from the wind. It did, and I soon had a good fire going, and five matches left. But my one fire was not enough, and was not big enough. If I was warm in front I was freezing behind. So I made two fires and got between them. It helped, but still not good enough. Every time the wind changed direction slightly it came between the fires or round the end and hit me before losing its chill. I finished up with a huge fire about 30 ft in length and a semi-circular shape, and I lay on the ground inside the crescent.

The dog was still with me. Earlier he had thought it all a game. Now no doubt he was very dry and hungry and wanted to go home. I smacked him on the rump and told him to buzz off, but he just looked at me with doleful eyes, licked my hand and settled by my side. Occasionally he went into the dark for a few minutes, but as soon as I called or whistled he came back, whined a little and settled down again. My much bigger fire was a much bigger comfort, but by hell, it needed a hell-of-a-lot-more feeding. Then the task of searching around in the pitch darkness for wood began. There was no moon, and it was not yet 9 o'clock pm.

My idea of how long my pile of wood would last had been sadly wide of the mark. There were two ways of finding, walk around until I went backside-over-tip over a dead tree or branches; or pick out the dead trees that were still standing - in the light from the fire - and push and shove until I had them uprooted and drag them to the fire. This went on all night. Always intently listening for a vehicle passing along the road. Although with the wind rising and whistling through the trees this was rather a forlorn hope.

It was 9 o'clock when I realised I had not seen the dog for some minutes. I called and whistled, but no, he had gone home. Good luck to him. He had stayed with me longer than I expected he would. It had been dark for just on 3 hours. Strangely, now the dog had gone, it was so much darker, blacker. Outside the glow from the fire just black - blackness from which came a whining, freezing wind. I lay as flat on the ground as possible to avoid the smoke which was making my throat very parched and hurting my eyes, and also to keep all my body warm and not only the bottom half.

And so the hours passed. About 20 minutes groping around, tearing my legs, pulling down trees and dragging them in. About 30 minutes lying flat on the ground close to my fire getting that 20 minute chill out of my body. And as the night went on I had to go further afield into the dark to get my trees - the more I groped, the more I stumbled and fell, the more numbed I became and the less I felt. And while lying sheltered by the warmth of the fire and getting parched by the smoke, and straining to hear a vehicle - utter blackness - whining wind - and nothingness - just black nothingness. I always thought there was no such thing, there is. It swallows you. Swallows you deep down.

No, there is something else. The stars. The stars and one's thoughts. You have to keep a tight reign on them, the thoughts. You would like to stretch up and touch a star. You can't. You know because you try; and smile because you are being stupid, and laugh because it's all right to be stupid when no one knows about it. But no, you don't laugh - you just begin to make the effort, and only make a harsh croak, because your throat is parched.

And so groping, stumbling, heaving, shoving, pulling down trees and dragging them to my fire, and after a few minutes, a big blaze again. Lie down and think. Think steadily, think steadily and constructively. Listen for vehicles. You have heard nothing yet, and with the wind howling in the bushes not likely to hear anything. Anyway who would be travelling between Alice Springs and Western Australia on Saturday night and Sunday morning, with hundreds of miles of nothing between? That's right you know, they would plan their journey to get most of it in during daylight. Oh God - that's right you know. What's the time now? What the hell does it matter? Did you wind your watch up, it's just after 1 o'clock Sunday morning. Perhaps it has stopped. In any case, because the road runs from Alice Springs to the W.A. Border it does not mean it runs due east-west. It could just as likely run south-east to north-west and still hit the W.A. Border. In that case - what's the time - Christ, I'm dry and parched.

If the dog was here I would not be able to talk to him. He would be displeased and think that I was angry with him. I hope he found something to eat. I know water was there for him. If the wind was less strong the smoke would have time to rise a little before it hit me. I can't get any closer to the ground - or can I? What's the time? Why worry, you have until eternity. Until eternity. Remember that writing you used to see on the pavement in Sydney. A fine copperplate style, "Eternity", eternity, eter - steady on friend. Probably you will have another day and another night, and maybe the best part of another day after that. A nice quiet time to think nice quiet thoughts, your problems solved - happy thought. Something to smile about - what. Even the racing problem. Shake yourself up man. Cut it out. Get out and get more timber. Keep bringing in more timber. Do something. Stop thinking. What's the time. Stop thinking. Do something. Bring in timber. Go to buggery. Bring it in yourself. I must conserve my energy, my lips and throat are parched, I feel half starved. I had only a cup of coffee for lunch, that's your own fault you stupid bastard. Bring in more wood, do something.

Right, I'll go to sleep. No you bloody well won't, listen for vehicles. What's the time? It's just after one thirty. My God, it must have stopped, perhaps the smoke affected it.

If you don't hear a car what do you do? Be positive about this, definite, it's no good wandering around in circles. Well, I could be wrong about the road running between the hill I saw and where I am now. BUT as I have absolutely no other clue to go on, I must head for that hill. If I don't hit the road I shall get to the top of that hill and light my fire there on Sunday night. It's going to be colder on top of that hill than down here. I don't care, I have five matches. My God - that'll help. You have no handkerchief to start a fire with one match. I may not need it, from the hill I may be able to see the camp. You have to get to the top of the hill first.

Distances are very deceiving. Those hills may be many miles away, but from the top of that hill my fire could be seen. At present nobody knows I am lost, by Monday morning they will know. They may not be able to see a fire in daylight. I shall make smoke, suppose - quiet, I hear - dear God please - quieten the wind for a few seconds - please. Yes I hear a truck. Very definitely a heavy truck in that direction. What direction? There is no direction in utter blackness. You fool. Find a marker, quick. That will do, a dead tree, quite close to my fire, with one big arm pointing to the road. Good, now you can breathe more easily. No more wandering thoughts, just settle down for the remainder of the night, and you'll be back in camp sometime tomorrow morning. Sometime this morning. Yes - that's right, what's the time? Just two o'clock. God, how it drags. Four and a half hours till sunrise, before I can get going. Never mind, you are O.K. Now just settle down, keep warm. You are O.K. now.

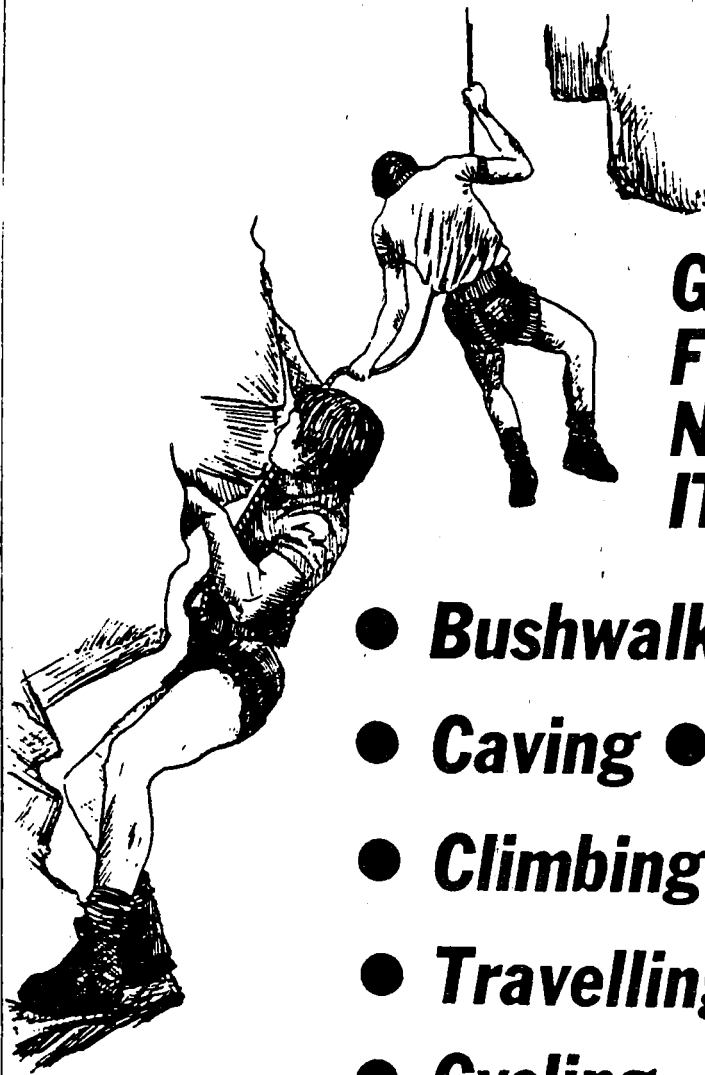
By half past six it was light enough for me to pick out the hill I had been making for. It was in exactly the opposite direction to that I should have been going in. I used that hill as a landmark, and knew if I kept it directly behind me as I walked I must come to the road within a few miles. But this idea soon proved pretty useless. After a few hundred yards the hill was obscured by trees, all I could go by then was the sun. It was coming up on my left. I reckoned to hit the road inside a couple of hours or so, and the sun changing position as it came up should not alter my direction much in that time.

Yes, I very suddenly saw the road in front of me just on 8 o'clock. It was like seeing Piccadilly Circus and Broadway at the same time. I knew I had to turn right on the road, and strutted along as nimbly and upright as I was able. Had it been possible I would have been singing. I sat on the side of the road for a while to remove thorns and prickles from inside my boots and socks. They were absolutely saturated and my feet frozen from the dampness and frost on the undergrowth I guess. A little after 8.30 I saw the caravans, Buckingham Palace could not have looked grander or more welcome, and a few minutes later the dog came bounding out to greet me. I believe he was as happy to see me as I was to be back. I quickly had about a pint of steaming milk coffee with an ample dose of rum in it, and sat with my feet in a bowl of hot water. Then as I rinsed the dirt and mud off my legs I could see the extent of the scratches and lacerations on my legs. It's not much of an exaggeration to say there was as much raw flesh to be seen as there was skin. Up to then I was not aware of it, even at that time my legs were too numb to feel anything. They are healing up quite well, although they look pretty horrible with scabs and scratch scores from above my knees to below my ankles. The lower ones caused no doubt by deeply embedded thorns and prickles scratching away for many hours. After that into some warm clothing and into bed to sleep for four hours.

I soon knew I had a very severe cold coming, and it blossomed magnificently during Tuesday and Wednesday. But has passed off just as quickly. Today I feel it has completely gone, and I am back to normal. So ends the saga of a - - - - Bushman" except for one thought that keeps going through my mind - the dead tree with a dead arm and two fingers? It was quite close to my fire. And another tree, the first one I pulled in I arranged it close to my fire and lay against it during the night. And although during the latter part of the night I had to go many yards into the bush to find my dead trees and drag them back, I cannot recall the thought ever going through my head that I had two trees quite close at hand. Why? Is it possible I had, without even thinking of it, accepted these things as companions.

I have just read what I have written. I had intended just to write a letter, explaining what it's like to be lost in the bush for a night. A rather unpleasant experience I would prefer not to have again. Maybe you can read this and feel something of how a person feels under those circumstances. Perhaps you will get no sense or feeling from it at all. I send it on to you anyway. I hope it won't bore you stiff.

BOB.



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LETTER TO THE
EDITOR.

WHEW! WHADIDISAYWRONG?

by Ronald Knightley.

Throughout recorded history and all around the world, it has been known that the zealots of a cause will brand as antipathetic any person who dares to question instead of accepting the cause in blind faith. This is the only reason that I can think of for Alex Colley's placing me "on the other side of the fence" for my conservation article in the April "Bush Walker" or for Mark Weatherley's emotional response to it, including ascription to me of views which I do not hold and most certainly did not express.

A detailed response to their two articles would be wearisome; but three particular aspects bear further thought.

Alex's reference to nearly 500 bushfires in state forests missed the essential point of my question to the Minister, for I was referring to major, repeat major, bushfires - of the kind that leave hundreds of square kilometres of devastation. As, for example, the one that blasted Ku-Ring-Gai Chase just a few years ago, with scarred hillsides still so clearly visible from afar. Its damage alone bids fair to rival the aggregate of all the forest fires to which Alex referred.

If one wants to know where the fire potential really is, one need only ask the country volunteer fire-brigade captains, as I have done over the last several years. Those whom I have questioned have been unanimous in expressing, not just concern, but outright fear of the national parks. They have expressed no such fear of the state forests.

A new day appears to be dawning, however. In April I visited the top end of the Wollemi National Park. I had hopes of camping on some cliff-tops to take landscape photos in the lights of sunset and sunrise. Alas, the area was blanketed for a whole week under a pall of bushfire smoke so heavy that I did not venture from the floor of the Widden Valley. On enquiry, property owners told me that the fire was a controlled burn-off being conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Wollemi.

This information was taken with a grain of salt until, in June, a fire-brigade captain 500 kilometres to the south advised me that a Parks ranger had recently stated to a public meeting that it is now Service policy to engage in controlled burn-offs in national parks.

As I fretted at the all-pervading smoke in the Widden Valley, I could not help thinking of Rabbin Burns' immortal line, "Ah, poor, wee, sleekit, cowerin', timorous beastie," and wondering how many timorous beasties of the Wollemi ecology were cowering in terror before the rangers' flames. And dying.

In case my words appear to imply some irreverence for the wisdom of the N.P.W.S., let me hasten to say that, if controlled burning is the only alternative to major bushfires, then I am prepared to accept that it may be the lesser of the two available evils (like controlled grazing versus uncontrolled pigs at Kosciusko). But are there only two evils to choose from? Might we also have to admit that in certain areas of some national parks, controlled culling of timber might do less aggregate damage to flora and fauna than controlled burning? Now, please read all my qualifying adjectives before developing a nervous twitch in the trigger finger.

Mark quite erroneously referred to me as supporting the four-wheel-drivers. My April article merely paraphrased the question that another asked of the Minister; and, in the article's peroration, I mused as to how the four-wheelers might influence the ballot box. This did not in any way imply that I support them. Nevertheless, I do not condemn them out of hand, either, for I know that many of them are also professed conservationists - our own Conservation Secretary being noteworthy among them.

Also, Mark stated that I should have kept my views to myself and not aired them in front of the Minister. I am of course aware that a delegate representing an organisation must, in the absence of plenipotentiary powers, follow the "party line" unless his statements are preceded by appropriate disclaimers. If nothing else taught me that, my years of representing S.B.W. at Federation certainly did! But does Mark imply that S.B.W. has become some sort of non-democracy in which a member is expected not to speak his mind in the Club room? Even if that is so, however, across what tenets of S.B.W. policy did I transgress by asking the Minister if he could do something to save our national parks from the scourge of major bushfires?

Finally, I turn to a recent political development which appears to bear on part of my April article. In his June announcement vetoing a proposal to enlarge the Murrumbidgee coastal national park, Mr. Carr was reported as stating that the time has come to balance conservation with commonsense. This statement occurred after a well-attended public meeting had voted against the enlargement proposal by a four to one majority, heaping large doses of vituperation on the N.P.W.S. and its supporters in the process. Do I discern a Ministerial reflection of one of the concerns that I expressed in April, namely the possibility of a backlash in the electorate?

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LETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF THE HACKING RIVER.

July 18 1986.

Dear Friend,

HELP SAVE THE ROYAL FROM URBAN SPOIL

The Friends of the Hacking River is a voluntary community group formed for the purpose of extending and protecting Royal National Park. We need your support to help save the Royal.

Wollongong City Council is proposing to urbanise the headwaters of the Hacking River - polluting the river, severely degrading bushland and rain-forest through weed invasion and control burning, and building on proposed park additions.

Only additions to Royal National Park and an end to urbanisation Hacking River catchment can save our first national park.

The campaign needs your group's support.

- * Every letter to local member of parliament and government ministers...
- * Every friend you tell about the despoilation of Royal National Park...
- * Every community group that resolves to lobby...
- * Every donation... COUNTS.

Write to - The Hon FJ Walker QC, MP Minister for Housing
 The Hon RJ Carr MP Minister for Planning and Environment
 The Hon R Unsworth MP Premier of NSW
 or visit your local member of parliament

Request that all natural lands in the Hacking River catchment be added to Royal and that no further urban development in the catchment area take place.

STICK WITH ROYAL - Enclosed is a bumper sticker. Your group can help save the Royal by selling these stickers which retail at \$1.00 and wholesale at 77 cents. Every member of your group can help by displaying our bumper sticker proudly on their car.

Yours faithfully,

KEITH MUIR. Secretary

The Friends of the Hacking River.



CANOE & CAMPING

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WE STOCK THE LARGEST RANGE OF CANOEING GEAR IN N.S.W.

QUALITY TOURING CRAFT OF ALL TYPES HIGH QUALITY PERFORMANCE COMPETITION CRAFT

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- FOOTWEAR • MANY TYPES OF BUOYANCY & LIFE VESTS • HELMETS



GENERAL MEETING on 10-7-86.

by Ainslie Morris.

The meeting opened at 8 minutes past 8 pm and apologies received from Barbara Bruce, Greta Davis, Narelle Lovell, Margaret Reid and Barry Wallace.

Barrie Murdoch took the Chair with 32 members braving the cold winds to attend. Minutes of the previous meeting were read and received and the business arising concerned the relocating of the meeting hall.

The Treasurer reported a deficiency of \$139. \$4,332 is the bank balance and the advance bank deposit will be drawn on to the amount of \$2,500 to pay immediate expenses, mainly the Personal Accident Premium. Out of 475 members on the Membership List (that is, financial members) 235 single, 61 household, 25 non-active, a total 311 paid and 149 have not paid, that is, 25%. There is a trend to non-active and household membership.

Non-programmed walks must be notified to the Committee in writing for party members to be insured, and visitors are not insured.

Correspondence went to Milo Dunphy (congratulations), Mrs. Crosio MP and Mr. Carr MP about proposed dams on the Colo River, a letter from Jim Brown on public liability insurance which was read in full. The Committee will give close attention to the wording of the Policy and Jim's warnings heeded.

The Walks Secretary, our Carol, said the Budawangs Odyssey of 12,13,14 June did not go, but Oliver Crawford's Wollongambe trip had 4 starters and 2 hangers-on. The day walks had 41 booked for Pierce's Pass but 31 came and 29 went. The Harbour trot went.

June 20,21,22 had a Kanangra walk of 21 with a memorable occasion of a singsong around the campfire and a snow blizzard on the way out; and Carol's Gosper's Mountain skating party of 7 negotiated the frozen puddles and went up for a fantastic view. 27 went on a Royal National Park walk including the "heavies" (President, Bill Capon, et al) off tracks, and 17 or so went to Marramarra N. P.

On 27,28,29 June 4 club members and 4 odds and sods went caving at Tuglow Caves, but the S.B.W. only went one day because there wasn't any scrub. The Newnes trip stayed outdoors to enjoy the fine weather with George Walton, and 7 prospectives went with Bill Capon on an Instructional Weekend. The day walk was led by Geoff McIntosh as Jan Mohandas' leg is not better, and Redledge Pass was found by Consensus (who?). Ben Esgate's bad knee prevented his Bushfire Instructional from going.

The S. & R. Practice was attended by 3 members * of S.B.W. and 25 other Federation members in the Colo River. They learned how to use the radios and look for "lost" walkers in a large area. On Sunday they set up a "flying fox" in order to dunk some people in the river. Mark Wetherley led Len Berlin's day walk, and there was no report on Les Powell's trip.

Federation Report from Spiro Haginakitas said BushSports is not officially sanctioned by the Department of Sport and Recreation. Offshore mining has been opposed and help given for Port Hacking. The Wog Wog track is good and C.M.W. was commended for all its hard work; the east side of Clyde River at Yadboro is closed by a barbed wire fence. Bush Leadership was discussed as Federation is trying to instigate a certificate course.

Conservation Report from Alex Colley concerned: Tasmania's new proposed woodchip areas; the application for Gippsland forests for woodchipping; the Pagoda Rocks area which was not added to Wollemi National Park; a proposed

power line from Point Piper to Marulan has a route not to be decided; and the Colo dams proposal by the Water Resources Commission which is denied totally by Mr. J. Aquilina, Minister for Natural Resources. (No longer as of July? - Ed.)

The motion proposing an archivist be paid to do preliminary work on the archives was put and a further motion to let it lie on the table was carried.

The recission motion regarding the fireplace in the Coolana hut was passed (meaning no new fireplace).

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* The three members who went on the Search & Rescue practice were:- Carol Bruce, Bob King and Ian Wolf (Prospective). This is the way to get your name in print - go to S. & R. practice. - Editor.

R S I of the TONGUE.

by Dr. Mac*

I was pleased to read last month my colleague's report on avoiding RSI of the foot. Here I would like to deal with the more serious problem of RSI of the tongue. This malady is caused by both the quantity and quality or extent of the activity to which the organ is subjected; for quantity equate repetitive (ie R), for quality equate the stress level (ie S). Together R + S lead to the injury (I), thus does RSI develope.

There are two major causes of tongue RSI, namely eating and talking. Toffee-like, high viscosity and/or tough high tenacity food requiring prolonged mastication (note spelling) can cause high levels of repetitive stress. Obviously a change in diet is the cure here. A liquid diet is to be recommended. A note of caution here; some liquid diets can cause ETRSI (see below). For serious walkers freeze dried egg nog, dehydrated porridge and slaked saos are excellent dishes.

The other cause of tongue RSI is excessive talking sometimes, and incorrectly, referred to as verbal diarrhoea (this will be covered in a later report). Excessive talking RSI, normally referred to as ETRSI, is caused by galloping monosyllablism either alone or compounded with polysyllablism. ETRSI is a difficult problem to cure. Counselling and psychiatric help to reduce the vocabulary have had success in about 57% of the known cases. Support of persons afflicted with ETRSI can be given by semisyllabic responses to the ET syndrome.

Relief to sufferers can be achieved by firmly binding the lower to the upper jaw with the standard 70mm crepe bandage. Should a bandage not be available then band-aids may be applied to seal the lips. RSI of the tongue may not be immediately recognised by the afflicted; side effects, however, do manifest themselves in companions, namely a buzzing or ringing in the ears.

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* Dr. Mac is a nom de plume assumed for ethical reasons.

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NOTE - A booking has been made for the WOOL SHED DANCE at OLD SYDNEY TOWN on SEPTEMBER 20th. We will meet at approximately 4.pm for Happy Hour at our camp nearby and on Sunday join Ainslie's Pearl Beach Walk. Early bookings are necessary for numbers for Old Sydney Town.
Ring Bill Holland - 86 4210 (H) 925 3309 (W)

Just a minute . .

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS - the Club Minute Book reveals:-

Federation of Walkers. Mr. Debert brought forward the matter of a Federation of Walkers. The Committee elected a sub-committee consisting of Messrs. Debert, Drake, Dunphy and Chardon to go into the matter and report back to the general committee. 1st August, 1930.

Federation of Walkers. Miss Lawry and Mr. Roots were appointed as delegates to represent the Club at the inaugural meetings of the Federation. Monthly Meeting held on Friday, 8th July, 1932. (Dorothy Lawry, now over 90, and Wally Roots are still living in Sydney. Ed.)

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Social Notes

Your Social Convenor will be absent until mid-October and Patrick James will be undertaking the social duties during this time. Thirty days hath September, so only two activities on the agenda.

17th September: Either Dot Butler the Intrepid will show slides and speak about climbing in the Andes. OR Members Slides (please dig up your old or new slides and bring them along just in case).

24th September: The Blue Grass Band will be entertaining us.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE MEETING OF 6th August.

The only matter arising from the Minutes was in reference to an application for a C.E.P. grant; the 60th Anniversary Sub-committee decided not to proceed with it.

Notice of the Paddy Pallin Foundation grants and loans was received and approval given for an application for a grant to restore the Club's archives.

\$100 cost if required of moving rocks to block the main entrance at Coolana was approved.

A best wishes card is to be sent to Dorothy Lawry who is the Club's oldest member (in age) and believed to be ailing. Thanks are to be sent to our visiting speakers for July.

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news NEWS news NEWS news

CONSTITUTION.

A draft Constitution is in this magazine for you to read before the Half-Yearly General Meeting in September. Have your comments ready then, and COME TO THIS VERY IMPORTANT MEETING.