

TOUGH CREEK

A monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers Incorporated, Box 4476 GPO, Sydney, 2001. Club meetings are held every Wednesday evening at 8 pm at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 16 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli (near Milsons Point Railway Station). Visitors and prospective members are welcome any Wednesday.

\* \* \* \* \*

EDITOR Morag Ryder, Box 347 PO, Gladesville 2111  
Telephone 809 4241

PRODUCTION Fran & Bill Holland  
Telephone 484 6636

TYPIST Kath Brown

ILLUSTRATOR Morag Ryder

PRINTERS Kenn Clacher, Les Powell, Margaret Niven  
& Barrie Murdoch

\* \* \* \* \*

# FEBRUARY 1991

		Page
While the Billy Boils	The Editor	2
The Annual Reunion		2
Social Notes		2
More Names for our Honour Roll		3
Book Review - "The Barefoot Bushwalker"	Alex Colley	4
Crikey Canyon - and Beyond	Bob Hodgson	5
New Members		7
Mailbag	Brenda Cameron	9
Cooking with Spices in the Bush	Jan Mohandas	9
A Tale of Three Rivers Part 2		
- The Chandler River	Michele Morgan	10
The January General Meeting	Barry Wallace	12
Impressions of Czechoslovakia		
- Winter 1990/1991	Helen Gray	13
Aftermath	Morag Ryder	14

## Advertisements

Willis's Walkabouts	7
Eastwood Camping Centre	8
Blackheath Taxis & Tourist Services	14

\* \* \* \* \*

## WHILE THE BILLY BOILS.

Now that Victoria has an Alpine Park adjoining ours, the respective Parks & Wildlife Services are trying to make a plan of management common to both. The subject of summer grazing is high on the agenda.

One good thing which the S.M.A. did for Kossi was to have the cattle removed, because of soil erosion and water pollution. Victoria is not so lucky. A recent visit to the Victorian Alpine Area was an eye-opener. At the height of the flowering season, the lack of wildflowers was amazing. Obviously, they make tasty cattlefeed. In their place were heaps of cow manure, all swarming with flies.

The local graziers are incensed at the thought of having this source of free feed taken away, but it's hard to see how they would be seriously disadvantaged. All over Australia there are graziers who provide their stock with summer feed by planting improved pasture. Surely those in the vicinity of Bogong High Plains are capable of doing likewise?

If you can spare a couple of stamps, you might like to write to the Federal and the Victorian ministers for environment (as I have) to remind them of this. After all, would you like to spend your Alpine walks going tippy-toes through the moo poo?

See you on the track....

*Moray*



## THE ANNUAL REUNION

It has been decided that the Reunion will NOT be held on the weekend after the A.G.M., but over the weekend 14/15 September. It will be held at "Coolana", our own property in the Kangaroo Valley. Full details about the Reunion and how to get there will be published in the magazine.

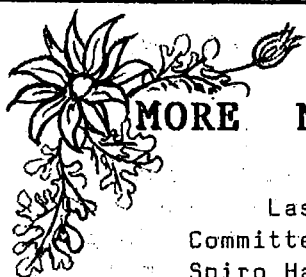
## SOCIAL NOTES

13th March - The Annual General Meeting. Come along and elect the Office Bearers and Committee for the coming year. Only members may vote but all active members are eligible to stand for every office.

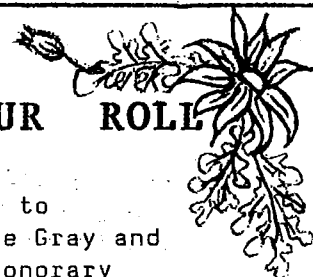
20th March - Instead of meeting in the clubroom, a BARBECUE will be held in the back garden of the Kirribilli Community Centre, starting 6.30 pm. Drinks will be provided by the Club - bring your own tucker.

27th March - A display of the equipment taken on certain types of trip -  
(a) Abseiling - (b) Li-loing - (c) Trips requiring very light-weight gear.  
Very informative for all members, and especially prospectives.

\* \* \* \* \*



## MORE NAMES FOR OUR HONOUR ROLL



Last November Jim and Kath Brown wrote to Committee suggesting that Helen Gray, George Gray and Spiro Hajinakitas be added to our list of Honorary Active Members. At the December Committee Meeting the motion was unanimously passed to cries of "What a good idea!", and "We should have done it sooner!" The announcement was made at the Christmas Party and the certificates will be presented at the Annual General Meeting on 13th March.

Such laurels are not easily won, but are given by the Club in sincere appreciation for years of service and support - as you will see by the following:-

### HELEN GRAY

Admitted to membership (Helen Barrett) October 1959  
 Committee Member 1960-1  
 Membership (New Members) Secretary 1961-2  
 Secretary 1974 -76  
 President 1976-78  
 Editor 1978 - 82  
 Magazine Production Manager since 1979 to present time  
 Wrote chapter of Club's 60th Anniversary History, covering the years 1967 - 77  
 Assisted in organisation of various social events and concerts  
 Assisted in sorting and arranging Club Archives 1987 - 88

### GEORGE GRAY

Admitted to membership (about) October 1952  
 Committee Member 1955 - 56  
 (Winner Colour Slide Competition Annual Photo Exhibition 1958, and subsequently assisted with organisation and judging of Exhibitions)  
 Treasurer 1961 - 2  
 Involved with Coolana Management since 1970  
 Architect, Works Foreman and Chief Builder of the Coolana Hut  
 (No doubt gave extensive support for Helen as Secretary, President, Editor, and in the monthly task of magazine production)

### SPIRO HAJINAKITAS

Admitted to membership ("Bill Ketas") October 1959  
 President (as "Spiro Ketas") 1970 - 72  
 Auctioneer at Club Auctions for several years in 1970s  
 Editor 1972 - 76  
 Secretary 1976 - 78  
 Represented SBW at Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs for almost 10 years, including the offices of Secretary and Minutes Secretary, during this time was on SBW Committee as Federation Delegate  
 Treasurer 1989 - 90  
 (In addition, who was it that provided and carried so much edible fare to SBW Reunions? Who operated a cut-rate sale of Volley sandshoes for Club members for many years? Oh, I think his initials were S.H.  
 For myself, I can only admire the Greeks when they bear gifts -

Jim Brown)

## BOOK REVIEW

by Alex Colley

### "THE BAREFOOT BUSHWALKER"

For many years her friends have urged our first Honorary Active Member, Dot Butler, to write a book on her adventures. Not until she was awarded the Australian Geographic Society's ADVENTURER OF THE YEAR medallion in June 1989 (in recognition of her contribution to Australian bushwalking and mountaineering and encouragement of adventure among young people) did she consent, at the request of the A.B.C., to write such a book, which was given the above title.

Dot describes her wide ranging experiences in her simple, intimate and vivid style, enriched with humour and quotations from her beloved poets, a style so well appreciated by readers of the SBW magazine. Starting from childhood with a real cameo of adventure in b.c. (before cars and radio) suburban Sydney, when people entertained each other, she graduates from bushwalking to rock climbing and mountaineering, first in New Zealand, later in the Alps, the Andes and Himalayas, cycling in Europe and Cambodia, canoeing the Yukon, and many other adventures in remote places. Most of her trips have been described in the magazine, but they will not have been read by more recent members. It is regrettable that the A.B.C. deleted a good deal of her writing on bushwalking, which would undoubtedly have had a wide appeal to the many thousands of bushwalkers, but we may hope it will appear in another book.

The book is much more than a chronicle of adventures. It is very well written. The A.B.C. describes it as "filled with thrills, romance and challenges as she recalls her childhood, her career, marriage and adventure. It is presented with extraordinary immediacy and peopled with men and women who have been her companions in entertainments and danger. It also reveals a personality of warmth and charm whose sense of fun and abundant enjoyment of life characterise all her experiences."

Dot's love of the natural environment recurs in every page. It is therefore not surprising that, even before she joined the Club and was influenced by the eloquence of her close friend Myles Dunphy, she was a keen conservationist. Her work for the SBW is well known to Club members, but they may not appreciate her ever willing and generous support of wilderness conservation.

Nor perhaps do members of the SBW fully appreciate Dot's gift to adventurers. As Colin Putt concluded when presenting the Australian Geographic medallion:-

"She initiates adventure, not only for herself, but also for many others. She involves, encourages and teaches others who, but for her leadership, might never get into adventuring at all, and leaves them, scores or hundreds of them, capable and innovative adventurers in their own right. She has made us what we are."

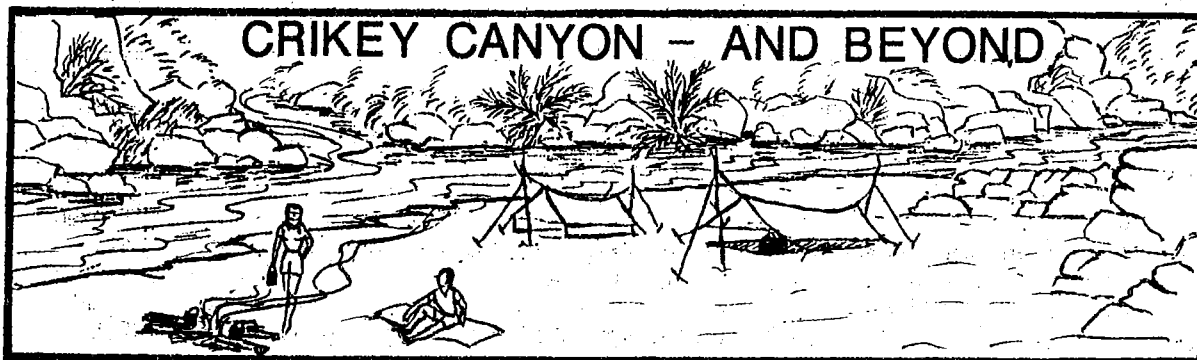
The book "THE BAREFOOT BUSHWALKER" will be available in the clubroom at \$24.95.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE CHINESE DID IT FIRST



Camp stoves are becoming more popular as our concern about environmental damage increases. But the Chinese were conscious of the need for fuel conservation many centuries ago. In an old painting is depicted a young girl brewing tea at a picnic. Simple equipment - in fact, I think I could make it myself....



by Bob Hodgson

Some canyons achieve notoriety by their human traffic, sheer size, or spectacular scenery, but Crikey, I'm sure, was named after the sounds echoing up and down the canyon as intrepid abseilers struggle to regain their composure at each belay point. A succession of indescribably awkward take-off points has even the most experienced and graceful exponents of the art reduced to blubbing novices - jamming feet, grinding over rocks, and slipping upside down. Fortunately it is quite dark, so that the rest of the party hardly notice.

It was these fond memories that drew me to revisit Crikey. However, the trip was programmed for the first weekend of the Summer Walks Program which was very late being distributed. So late that the only people who could be talked into coming at such short notice also confessed that they hadn't even been on a Gordon Lee Abseiling Instructional, let alone down a canyon.

Having consoled myself that all those ropes would have been too heavy to carry on the rest of the trip anyway, the party of five met on Friday night at the Bungleboori Picnic Area, for a trip (without abseiling) to Crikey and beyond.



An early start on Saturday saw the party covering the flatish but zig-zag Brakevan Ridge out into the pristine wilderness that is Wollongambe country. Shortly after morning tea we arrived at the head of the cleft that cuts right across Brakevan between the two Bungleboori Creeks. The cleft is easily negotiable down to the north arm of Bungleboori (or Caboose Creek as it is named on the tourist map) with only a couple of hundred metres of creek down to the confluence with Crikey.

At twelve o'clock early lunch was declared at the entrance, just out of the icy blast of air that emanated from the canyon. After lunch the aim was to walk and climb as far up the canyon as we could. Only thirty metres up our first major obstacle was encountered, the canyon closed right in, and in the dark, we climbed with the aid of a log and a hand line up two huge, wet, slimy boulders, out into a very beautiful section of the canyon. High verticle walls, rich green carpets of moss and slender trees laced with sunlight. Another hundred metres of mild obstacles took us to an unclimbable waterfall disappearing into the blackness above.

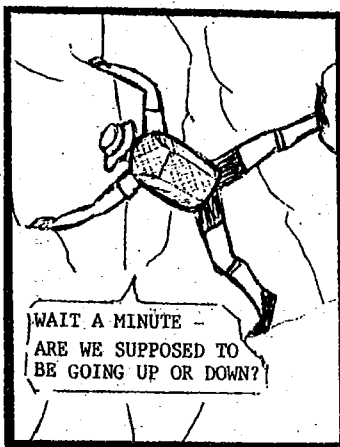


The two and a half kilometres of creek down to the junction were spectacular, with massive cliffs overhanging the creek at first, and an almost continuous large boulder-strewn creek bed. Occasionally the creek was cleaned out to bedrock, with small clefts and waterfalls making the going quite slow. We arrived at our objective - the junction of the two Bunglebooris at about 6 pm (four hours after leaving Crikey). The sun was still shining on a large sand bank on which the party collapsed, vowing not to move till morning.

A lavish spread for "Happy Hour", including caviar with copious quantities of liquid ground-softener made sure the whole party slept well, despite a light shower of rain during the night.

For the ascent up onto the end of Boiler Ridge, via a small watercourse midway between our camp site and the Dumbano junction, was steamy, even though we were on top by 9 am. The views from this point are extensive and quite spectacular.

Crossing below and to the north of the summit our next obstacle was the deep cleft to be crossed to get to Steam Hill. A short but deep and narrow pass provided access to a narrow wooded ledge halfway down the verticle cliff. The ledge miraculously led the whole 200 metres or so directly and horizontally to the saddle. After a steep 80 metre climb to the flat top of Steam Hill, the main spectacle was the impossibility of the route we had just taken! It was also at about this time we realised that for us this ridge system was very aptly named. The day had become searingly hot and humid - and this group of old boilers was boiling on Boiler Ridge.



From Steam Hill another deep cleft must be crossed in astonishingly similar fashion to the previous one. Namely, a climb down to a wide sloped ledge which leads directly from the saddle to the top of the next hill.

Up down, up down, hotter and hotter. This was just not the day to be doing Boiler. Our throats were parched and the water we were carrying was rapidly running out. A quick lunch at noon before a dash along the flatter parts of the ridge to a large rock platform overlooking the ridge to the west which breaks up into a myriad of tors, spires and rocky outcrops.

From here the alternative plan of crossing Bungleboori directly back to Brakevan Ridge had become a necessity, as we had run out of time and inclination to traverse the row of tors known as The Western Arthurs.

It was five o'clock by the time we reached Bungleboori after the descent from the nose of a hundred metre high, five metre thick tongue of rock into a slit canyon (oh, the glorious clear cold water!) leading out into the main canyon. Right opposite are what look like three possible routes up out of Bungleboori. However the lowest was blocked by an overhang at the base and the middle one was filled by a very recent land slide. The third was one of those deep narrow slits which might have been negotiable, but if it wasn't it would have cost us at least an hour and a half that we did not have.



So it was the landslide by a landslide. We very carefully climbed up to where two freshly planted boulders blocked the way. No way round - had to go over - nothing but crumbly loam everywhere - nothing to grip - despair!



We needed an Indian rope, and there it was, a sapling 12 metres long. The whole party, man and woman, handled it up the offending slope. Wayne climbed via our Indian rope and put a regular one around a sturdy tree for the rest of the party.

It was a very weary but jubilant party that arrived back at the cars just after sunset.

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### NEW MEMBERS

A welcome to two new members who were admitted at the January Committee meeting:-

HAMILTON, Erith

BIEGER, Stephen

## THE MACDONNELL RANGES

Rising almost vertically out of the plain that surrounds them, the Macdonnell Ranges dominate the central Australian landscape. Incredibly rugged and forbidding at first glance, they hide numerous deep gorges where permanent water provides green oases, the sole remaining habitat for ancient plant species which covered central Australia in days when the land was far wetter.

Those who view the Macdonnells from below see only a small part of the landscape made famous throughout the world by Albert Namatjira and other Aranda painters. They miss the spectacular vistas you get from the high points. The mountains seem to extend for ever as they snake out of sight to the east and west.

This is a landscape where colour dominates as nowhere else. Sometimes it is a striking contrast such as a white ghost gum outlined against blue sky or red rock. At others, a subtle merging as when the soft greens and yellows of the plains yield to the blues of distant hills. Whether striking or subtle, it is always beautiful.

Our treks take you away from the crowds into the heart of the ranges to enjoy the sights and experiences that others can only dream about. Write or phone for a free brochure describing our bushwalking tours in the Macdonnells, the rest of the NT and the Kimberley.

### **Willis's Walkabouts**

12 Carrington Street

Millner NT 0810

Phone: (089) 85 2134

Fax: (089) 85 2355







**MAILBAG**

*Seems I'm not the only one who dislikes the smell of cow manure. Brenda Cameron found it sufficiently disgusting to write to the Victorian Premier herself!*

*ED.*

Dear Mrs Kirner,

I recently visited the high mountain country of Victoria, and being quite keen on walking spent what would have been a glorious day walking in the Alpine National Park. I qualify my enthusiasm for this area because I was, frankly, surprised and quite appalled by the only too obvious results of the cattle grazing which is still allowed in this National Park - cattle excrement, resultant over-population of flies and the virtual denudation of the wild flowers which during the summer months would, and should be, carpeting the alpine plains.

I have often visited the New South Wales Kosciusko National Park during the summer months, particularly the area between the Thredbo Chairlift and Mount Kosciusko, and this area never ceases to please and delight me - despite its ease of access, popularity and hence large numbers of people walking around this area, the fact that the cattle were banished from here some time ago has enabled the Park to return to its original splendour, the mess and abnormal quantities of flies being long gone and wild flowers once again flourish on the mountain sides and plains.

These alpine regions particularly of South-East Australia are not only splendid places but they are also absolutely treasures of the nation. In a vast country such as ours, with so much space, it seems hard to justify use of our fine National Parks as grazing areas. Australia can, and should, preserve its National Parks in their natural state, as they always were, that is before the impact of man and his beasts upon the environment. There is room, and indeed greater know how and technology than previously, to enable cattle to be grazed on designated farmland and grazing areas outside the Parks. In my opinion, the Victorian Government in allowing this misuse of Alpine National Park is as guilty of spoiling a treasure of the nation as surely as if it were perpetrating a defacement of any other work of art. It is time to move the cattle out of the National Parks and preserve our heritage.

I would be interested in hearing of your government's future proposals on this subject.

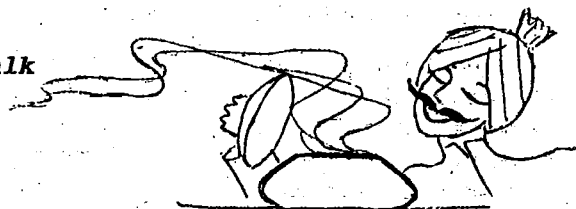
BRENDA CAMERON.

**COOKING WITH SPICES IN THE BUSH**

**BY: Jan Mohandas**

***BORED with your usual bush tucker?***

***For your next base camp or bludge walk try something that will make your fellow walkers drool with envy!***

**PILAU (SPICY RICE WITH GREEN PEAS)****INGREDIENTS: (FOR ONE PERSON):**

- 1/2 Cup long grain rice
- 1 Tablespoon oil
- 1 Small stick of cinnamon
- 2 Cardamon pods, bruised
- 1/4 Teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/8 Teaspoon turmeric, 1 or 2 Cloves
- 1.5 Cup water
- Cashew nuts (about 20), Sultanas (1 tablespoon)
- 1 Small onion, cut into strips

**Method:**

1. Heat oil, fry cashews until brown, remove the cashews
2. Fry sultanas for a min and remove
3. Fry onions until brown and remove
4. Fry the spices for 1 min (oil should not be too hot)
5. Mix turmeric and rice for 1 min away from the heat
6. Add peas and water and bring to boil
7. Cover and simmer gently until dry (don't burn)
8. Remove spices with spoon
9. Spread cashews, sultanas and onions on top of the rice



### PART TWO.....THE CHANDLER RIVER

Thursday, 29 December 1988

Dave got up early this morning AND STARTED THE FIRE! We had a 9.30 am start - straight into the water - EEEK! Cloudy with a rainy look to the morning again. At 10.30 am we stopped for morning tea, a fire and rock hugging. Even though the days were cloudy, the rocks were always VERY warm. David, meanwhile, repaired the foot-long tear in his lilo. We were all still VERY, VERY cold when it was time to get going again. Dave was the only one without thermals, so he borrowed my thermal jumper to test "this newfangled invention" for a while. At the end of the day he decided that his wool jumper was just as good.

Dave had to walk awhile before the patch had dried on his lilo, and just as he started Janet said to look out for snakes. He stumbled - he had almost trodden on a red-bellied black about five feet long - coincidence? We paddled on and on, making fair speed. Lots of small fast rapids kept our pace up and kept all but Edith on their lilos throughout - poor Edith capsized on every rapid. It was a long day as we couldn't find any campsites from about 3.00 pm on. Lots of flat areas were all totally freckled with bottom-sized rocks; could be an uncomfy night.

At 5.40 pm we eventually found a site amongst some she-oaks. We got a fire going at once and cowered around it, except for Janet and David who disappeared a long way up the slope behind us in search of .... sun. They stayed for hours after the sun had disappeared. The rest of us had dinner cooked and eaten by the time they returned.

Friday, 30 December 1988

Once again the day was cloudy. Edith started the fire and brought a hot cuppa to my door, mmm! Janet and Dave started the day by cooking a breakfast of the remains of their previous evening - Indian curry. An early start saw us hit the water at 10 am - we meandered through lots of shallow, continuous rapids. Morning tea at 11.30 am, at the junction of the Styx and Chandler Rivers - a windy spot.

The Chandler River was to be our path for the next few days and was a small, warm, sluggish trickle of water; obviously the Styx is the main contributor to the flow. We spent 1½ hours around a fire here, then we were off down the Chandler - still no sun showing through. After passing a mob of fishermen's 4WDs at the bottom of a rough fire trail, we settled on a lunch spot of many pebbles and THE SUN CAME OUT. Lunch from 1 pm to 2.20 pm and a warm, cozy, luxurious one it was too.

Hugging rocks became a wonderful occupation on this trip. Me soggy and cold, they warm to hot and dry - even when it was cloudy all day. At every stop Dave would start a fire and out would come Dave and Janet's five-cup billy and their tea - excellent!

On again - when going down a rapid half an hour later into a really wide, very deep, sluggish pool, my lilo sent up a bubble...a spa...a quick sag - a puncture - no, several.... panic! Seems a buckle on my pack had done a sewing machine act and punctured several holes through both sides of my lilo. So after desperately trying to reach shore without sinking and getting cold and wet up to my neck (the sun had disappeared, OF COURSE), I walked the

last half hour into camp. What a struggle - stinging nettles, slippery river stones and rock climbing. I was unimpressed, and the worst was that all could have been avoided. Edith, who was getting cold from several dips, also joined me after the worst of the walking, soon followed by David and Janet, also both cold, and Janet with a head cold too.

We wandered up to a wonderful grassy cow paddock, but couldn't catch Bob's attention. He was meandering swiftly downstream with the waterflow, looking most content! Eventually we stopped him and returned to a wonderful flat grassy spot for the evening. I had to dry my lilo and Janet's lilo also had several slow leaks. It was spitting rain, so we had trouble drying them before we could effect repairs - eventually successfully. My new lilo now had four patches. A totally dry night, could have slept under the stars, not a speck of rain after the afternoon splatter.

Saturday, 31 December 1988

Janet and Dave sprang into an exceedingly early start. Fire lit, billy boiled, tea ready and waiting for all - and A SUNNY DAY. I started out in thermals but soon changed



into my bright new fluoro orange and black sunning attire and set off to the river to soak up sun for a while. At 9.30 am, wondering what was keeping the others, I yelled out "9.30 and we're all late!" People came running from all directions, thinking that something was wrong. I apologised and we set off.

A fast, easy day with lots of sun, gentle, shallow, rapids and big, deep, pools just teeming with fish. Dave and Janet adopted an unusual form of travel today. Janet going down the river forwards, Dave going along backwards with his toes entwined with Janet's toes. They unfortunately came to grief while attempting a rapid in this fashion. Dave at the front facing backwards didn't see the stick which they both hit and which managed to tear both lilos and land them in the water. They walked for the rest of the day.

At lunch I got out my fishing line, as the river was filled to overflowing with monster trout. All I managed was a massive tangle in the line, and that was before I even got it in the water. Edith attempted to untangle it and was partly successful.

Today our aim for camp was the Chandler/Macleay River junction. We made it at 5.45 pm, but then spent a fair time looking for a good campsite to see in the New Year. Bob found a big flat paddock, covered with green grass, where a bushfire had been through about ten months before. To celebrate New Year's Eve, Dave and Janet emptied their humungus packs to reveal a feast. Vitawheats with Philly cheese and glace fruit, lollies and all sorts of other goodies. The rest of us managed to add a few things too. Halva, chocky, cashews, hot rum and lemon barley drinks, Violet Crumbles and two litres of port. We were all too full for dinner and at 10 pm Janet, Edith and myself crashed. The guys stayed up "To have a wee bit more port", and I believe Janet woke up close to midnight to again join the 'wild party'..... should auld acquaintance be forgot..... zzzzzz.

TO BE CONTINUED

\* \* \* \* \*

THE JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

by Barry Wallace

So these are the new premises; leafy, bucolic, two storey sandstone building with top floor verandahs front and rear, ex-gracious abode of the rich, famous, or both. The evening is clammy and warm, and the milling hordes, limited room sizes, interrogation style track lights and lack of ceiling fans aren't helping. At last the committee is done and at 2033 the President, with a surfeit of gonging, calls the meeting of some 35 (in the room that is, there were around 70 present in all) to order.

We began with Bill explaining the facilities and promising that we would soon have fans to cool our collective beaded brows. There were apologies from Jim Brown and Maurie Bloom. New members Erith Hamilton and Stephen Bieger were welcomed into membership.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and received with no matters arising.

There was no Treasurer's Report. Tony was still out there wrestling with our end of year accounts.

There was a Social Report.

The Walks Report began at the weekend of 14,15,16 December with the news that Les Powell's weekend walk on the Nattai did not go. It seems Les was laid low by an exotic bug he picked up in some foreign parts. No Virginia not those foreign parts. Of the day walks Ralph Penglis's Sydney Harbour Walk went, but there was no report. Brenda Cameron's Waterfall to Heathcote trip went with 20 starters and there were no details of Peter Christian's planned Fortress Creek canyon trip. The following weekend Geoff McIntosh led a flotilla of 4 li-los and a blow-up plastic boat on his Du Fours Creek canyon li-lo trip.

Ian Rannard's extended walk on Bogong High Plains (Dec 26 to Jan 1) had a party of 16 and went to program. Geoff Dowsett's Ben Boyd National Park walk (Jan 2 to Jan 6) had a party of 8 on a beautiful day walk - somewhere.

The weekend of Jan 5,6 saw Morag Ryder cancel her Bluegum area walk due to the presence of bushfires, while Ralph Penglis's Bundeena to Otford day trip was led by Keith Docherty with a party of 10.

January 12,13 saw Wayne Steele leading a party of 4 on his Cox River area walk. There were 4 in the party, it went to program. Was very hot. Ian Debert's Northern Beaches ramble/barbecue attracted 9 on the ramble and another 9 at the barbecue. Judy Mehaffey reported 12 enjoying a pleasant walk on her Waterfall to Heathcote day trip.

The Conservation Report covered that season when men's hearts are full of goodwill and politicians and developers slip the odd one past while everyone is looking the other way. It seems the Feds. gave the woodchip industry rights to another 4 million tons of wood chips and, at the local level, the bulldozers moved in on the Koala colony at Wedderburn.

The Confederation Report indicated that Canberra bushwalkers look set to part ways with Confederation over the matter of annual fees, and that the Confederation will meet at Ashfield R.S.L. throughout 1991 at some new frequency of meeting yet to be determined. A new track is to be established from Kanangra Tops saddle to the Coal Seam cave. Work is scheduled for 13,14 April. If you are available to help please contact Garry Philpott on 745-3634 (H).

Then came General Business, oh lordy! The Reunion, its timing and location were the subject to reason about. Bill led us into a maze of polling for opinions using multiple choice and split decision voting in the ball-park at a grass roots level. Those who paid attention were thoroughly confused except for two ladies who had managed to follow the tortuous strands of Bill's logic well enough to point out that they were not logically sound. The next Reunion will definitely be held somewhere at some time, I think. Watch that space.

The meeting closed at 2148.

\* \* \* \* \*

IMPRESSIONS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIAWINTER 1990/1991

by Helen Gray

Gabrielle and I met in Frankfurt and left in the evening for Czechoslovakia. In our sleeping compartment was a Czech woman who told us how wonderful it was for her to now be able to cross freely in and out of her country. "Freely" it might be in her eyes; to me it was quite intimidating. We crossed the border just after midnight. The train stopped with a jerk that woke me, and looking through the window I could see only deep snow everywhere & one lone building from which emerged two armed and uniformed men. These two then went through the train, waking everyone, scrutinising thoroughly every passport and visa, asking many questions (we were lucky to have our Czech friend's interpretations) and finally, reluctantly satisfied with our answers, passing on. The train didn't move off for another hour or so.

I'll jump ahead of myself to tell you about buying a railway ticket out of the country a few days later. We had plenty of Czech currency to buy the tickets, only to find that foreign currency (i.e. "good" currency like Deutschmarks or U.S. dollars) is necessary for buying tickets out of the country. (My friend Jurgen in Germany insisted on lending me 500 DM as I was leaving, insisting that Visa card was not good enough where I was going. How right he was!) Anyway, others without foreign cash - i.e. the ordinary Czechs - stood like us for 1½ hours in a queue. We were treated with total indifference, they were treated like dirt. Endless form filling, then to another counter (i.e. another queue) to pay for the tickets, then given a receipt and told to come back in 3 hours for the ticket and - yes, another queue. Over half a day to buy a railway ticket!

We lived like kings in Prague on the \$30 a day we were required to change (and can neither take out of the country nor exchange). The most expensive restaurant meal costs about \$4. But for the Czech life is very hard. Restaurants are empty except for the odd tourist. Every food shop had a long queue stretching down the street. The shortest queue I saw was three; that shop had, as total stock, broken onions, apples and one cabbage. The only women we saw were in shopping queues. The streets are full of wandering men. It was so frustrating not to be able to read or speak the language, and "where are all the women" was just one of a hundred questions we wanted answered. We spent two nights in the home of a family who were probably quite affluent by Czech standards as they had two rooms to rent and the husband had a job. Yet they were so very poor by Australian standards. And when we accidentally knocked on the wrong door when looking for our accommodation we saw depressing poverty.

Czechoslovakia intends/hopes to be in the Common Market in '92, so I can't understand how the E.E.C. will work. Next door is Germany with about zero inflation, yet Czechoslovakia was expecting a 500% devaluation of money in January.

The people are quiet. If I got separated from the others in a busy street, I could often hear them talking to one another even 25-35 yards away. It is probably the Slavic in them that gives most people broad faces and wide-set eyes, which result in a pleasant, open-faced look that is most appealing. People are courteous (even car drivers!) and warm and for me that meant a lot when communication was nil. I always felt very safe, even in the darkest alleys on the way "home" from the opera late at night. (By the way, best-seat-in-the-house in the most glorious of opera houses - all gold, red velvet, cherubs, ceiling frescos etc - to see a world-class production of "Fidelio" cost \$2.50.)

Prague is grubby and grimy because there is no money to clean buildings, but they (the buildings) are not falling down and every street and lane is a delight. There were buskers in town squares of the highest standard you've ever heard outside the Opera House. And jazz! New Orleans-style jazz is a feature of Prague, and that was wonderful.

\* \* \* \* \*

### AFTERMATH

Smoke still gives a bitter taste  
to the rain-washed air  
stumps below the earth  
still smoulder thin white plumes.

Soaked ashes are warmly damp  
and full of crumbling bones  
lizards, birds and possums  
which roasted in the blast.

Skeleton trees and blackened rock  
make nightmare landscape  
the ashen smell of death still rising  
after days of tardy rain

Procrastinating while the February Dragon  
roamed at will and seared the land  
devouring two centuries of growth  
in one greedy hour.

Morag Ryder

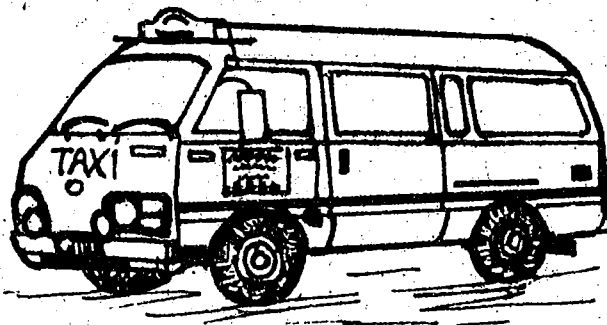
---

## BLACKHEATH TAXIS & TOURIST SERVICES

10 & 18 SEATER

MINI BUS TAXI

047-87 8366



KANANGRA BOYD

UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS

SIX FOOT TRACK

PICK UP ANYWHERE FOR START OR FINISH OF YOUR WALK

- BY PRIOR ARRANGEMENT

**Share the Fare**

**Competitive Rates**