



THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER is a monthly bulletin of matters of interest to The Sydney Bush Walkers Inc, Box 4476 GPO Sydney 2001. To advertise in this magazine, please contact the Business Manager.

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THE SYDNEY BUSH WALKERS INCORPORATED was founded in 1927. 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.

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October 1995

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Skiing in the Rockies

by Kenn Clacher

This is part two of Kenn's story of his trip to the American Rocky Mountains in April May of this year. This trip included the 10th Mountain Division Trails. We resume the story of the group's first day on the trail and recap a little from part one.

Our first day's travel entailed about 11 km and 600m elevation gain. There had been some more snow overnight which meant hard going for whoever was breaking trail. It soon became apparent that I had made a good choice of ski to use. I eventually opted for the Black Diamond Tonte Neiges being swayed by the fact that all the Americans on our previous trip had used skis similar to them. When in Rome do as the Romans.

It turned out to be the right choice. With fresh snow falling every night and temperatures generally staying below zero during the day, one application of a wide spectrum -30°-0° wax each morning along the whole length of the base was sufficient to ensure good grip and glide each day. I was delighted with how my skis performed throughout the trip as this was my first serious encounter with the alchemy of waxing. I would have no hesitation in taking them on any future trip in the Sierra Nevada or the Rockies, while recognising they are not suited to most backcountry trips in Australia. The extra width of the black Diamonds also helped greatly in limiting the degree to which I sank in the fresh snow. Wayne and David had great trouble with balling up and sinking deeply into the snow, even when they were following in my tracks.

The trail was marked with metal markers at reasonable intervals, except in "wilderness" areas where tree blazed served the purpose. Eventually we reached the spot on the road where the trail turned off the road and up a spur. A steep climb of a few hundred metres through fairly heavy forest brought us to the top of the ridge and into more open country. Another kilometre or so and we were at the hut after a little hunting around. It appears that the snow was so deep in the vicinity of the hut that the markers were covered by snow. We were greeted by a delightfully well-appointed and cosy hut with a magnificent view between periods of low cloud.

The next day was the one which had caused the most apprehension in pre-trip planning. It was only about 8km to Skinners, the next hut, but it required crossing the continental divide at Hagerman Pass at around

3600m (12,000ft). We were concerned by the possibility of poor visibility but next day dawned fine and Wayne had determined the way the previous afternoon. It turned out to be straightforward and navigation was assisted by a power line which crossed the pass. Part of the way was along an old railway grade and there were two disused railway tunnels through the mountains in the vicinity of the pass. Again the markers disappeared in the vicinity of the hut and a little hunting resulted in our spying the top of the hut peeping out from about 6 metres of snow. The doorway was located under a deck and it was only just possible to squeeze in under the deck to get to the door without resorting to the shovels. Again the hut was cosy after warming up and in the couple of hours that took we kept ourselves amused and warm by shovelling away some of the snow that was blocking the magnificent view and access to the toilet. We were happy to have crossed Hagerman Pass so easily as it meant that at least our way was now clear to reach Leadville.

We planned to spend two nights at our next hut, Uncle Bud's. Because of the continuing snowfalls and consequent heavy going we looked for an easier way than the marked trail. It turned out that we could ski along a well-graded road that skirts Turquoise Lake and leave the road at its highest point. It was then only a few kilometres along a valley and up a spur to the hut. This we decided to do. The first few kilometres were interesting as we had to lose a few hundred metres in elevation through thick forest, but accomplished this without skiing into too many trees. From there it was just hard slog along the floor of a spectacular valley and then along the road skirting high above the lake. The turnoff from the road was located without difficulty and from there to the hut was along another pretty valley followed by a climb. Uncle Bud's had great views of 13,000ft Galena Mountain towering on one side and a distant view to Mount Massive, at 14,420ft the highest peak in the Rockies.

We spent two nights at Uncle Bud's so the following day we made a day trip to Galena Mountain. Of the two main routes we had to take the longer but gentler one to avoid avalanche danger on the route. Avalanche danger was something that caused us some concern in planning the trip. We knew from our previous experience that the local skiers take avalanches very seriously indeed, and with good reason. There was plenty of evidence in several places of avalanches of enormous power having occurred in previous seasons. In Australia we are very fortunate that avalanches do

not feature prominently in trip and route selection. The 10th Mountain Division trails are routed specifically to minimise exposure to avalanches. We enquired in Aspen about hiring avalanche beepers but found there were none for hire. The cost to purchase was considerable so we decided to not take beepers but exercised all the other precautions. As it turned out on this particular trip the weather was not conducive to avalanches and we saw no evidence of any recent occurrences.

The top of Galena Mountain was duly arrived at and in between whiteouts we were rewarded by magnificent views all round of our route and of the Rocky Mountain divide. As the snow was a little crusty we could not reap our due reward on the way down of telemarking with gay abandon. On arriving back at the hut we met our first fellow skiers of the trip, who had skied in from the Leadville trailhead. This meant we had to surrender our sleeping spots around the fire and retreat to the dormitory, but the company made it worthwhile.

We skied out to the mining town of Leadville the next day covering around 8km in around two exhilarating hours of mostly downhill running. Then a dull slog of a few more km of road bashing finally brought us into

town. David and Wayne had decided that five days of battling fresh soft snow on narrow skis was enough for the time being and decided forego the second leg of the trip. I thought this would be a good opportunity to pursue a secondary objective of my trip – to ski the "Haute Route" from Chamonix to Zermatt, one of the world's classic ski trips. This turned out to be a forlorn hope, but there is always next year.

The 10th Mountain Division trails and huts are a great way for any reasonably experienced Australian skier to experience skiing in the Rockies without having to join a commercial tour. The area is also an excellent one for walking and the guides indicate summer routes as well as winter ones. Bookings and complete maps and guides can be obtained by contacting the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association in the US on 303 925 775. □

Change Notice

Zol's Aboriginal Workshop Walk

Zol Bodlay has deferred this walk from Saturday, November 25 to the following weekend Saturday, December 2. Please change the date on your Walks program. □

ISDELL MAGIC R E V I S I T E D

What do the Sydney Bushwalkers say about our trips to this wonderful area?

"A grand and spectacular part of the Kimberley. ...Great place, great company and excellent meals." Fran Holland

"The gorges were magnificent and the days too short." Bill Holland

"Lots of potential here... I wouldn't change a thing on this trip. Well done." Jim Percy

"Very spectacular scenery... I will remember some beautiful rock pools and the unfailing sunny skies." Jo van Sommers

For 1996, we are offering four trips to the Isdell River area.

On the first three trips listed below, you fly to Mt Hart, do the walk(s), spend the final night in the homestead, and fly back to Kununurra in time to make flight connections that day.

January 14-28. Experience the wonder of the Kimberley wet season. Two walks, the easier one first, allowing you time to acclimatise. The night between the walks will be in the homestead accommodation at Mt Hart.

July 7-20. A repeat of the trip Bill, Fran, Jim and Jo did this year, plus a helicopter food drop.

September 15-29. May be two walks as in January, or a repeat of the trip above.

And, for those who want something really adventurous....

July - August, 3 weeks (dates not yet final). 4WD from Kununurra. A major exploratory expedition (including a helicopter food drop) covering Bell Creek, the upper Isdell River and an amazing gorge on the Sprigg River.

For more information, ask for our trip notes.

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FROM THE CLUBROOM

By Jan Roberts

WALKING, GOOD COMPANY AND CANCER PREVENTION - September 20

Roger French, Executive Director for the Natural Health Society provided a lot of food for thought last month when he presented at the Clubroom. Throughout the night we discovered that there was not a single cause for Cancer, but a variety of contributing factors which, when combined produced the damaging results. Modern medicine it seems has not been successful in producing a cure for Cancer, but Natural Health experts agree that the causes are crystal clear, according to Roger.

Companionship and the number of people in our lives is a critical factor in avoiding Cancer. People living alone without external companionship are one of the largest groups at risk of becoming afflicted. This supports the theory that people literally DO need people. Grief experienced over a long period was also included as a contributing cause of Cancer, as evidenced with many Breast Cancer sufferers.

Happily though there is a lot we can do from a positive perspective ie: bush walking (companionship and exercise) to prevent Cancer from occurring. Avoiding man made chemicals in our food will also reduce the Cancer risk, and getting lots of fresh fruit and vegetables in our daily diet is of critical importance.

Roger pointed out that with a reasonably strong immune system we will naturally cope with the stresses both physical and mental and avoid developing Cancer. The worst approach we can take is to WORRY too much, because THAT causes Cancer. The final message was loud and clear..... Don't worry..... BE HAPPY!.... and eat well too!

Thank you Roger for a very informative and interesting evening, and thank you also for motivating many of us to review our current lifestyle. There have been more than a few diets modified as a result of your presentation to Sydney Bush Walkers last month.

THE VOLLEY BALL - September 22

A big crowd of keen dancers took over the Petersham Town Hall for the annual Confederation Ball last month. Amongst them were 30+ Sydney Bush Walkers organised by Denise Shaw who ensured that we had the best table in the hall. Only

days earlier Bob Carr had announced that Warragamba Dam wall would not be raised, and as a result a large thank-you card for Bob circulated for signatures throughout the night. The band was great and everyone danced themselves silly with or without the aid of Volleys. Many people attending went to considerable trouble to be in keeping with the theme, with one woman dressed as a Volley complete with laces, but thankfully without the authentic odour!

Tony Holgate wrote a poem to celebrate the occasion which adorned our table together with his oldest (really went well with the Blue Cheese) Volleys.

OLD VOLLEYS

Alas poor volleys, I knew you so well.

A sole of infinite patience, that I certainly desired.

You have borne me on your back a thousand times.

And how abhorrent in my imagination it is.

Here lay those uppers I have slipped into,

I know not how often.

On burning sand, freezing snow and sinking in mud

my feet knew the meaning of the seasons.

Where are your blister now?

Your slipping, your dancing, your fireside

camaraderie to put the world right?

Being one to mock your own demise,

you lay gathering dust in my wardrobe!

By Tony Holgate -September 1995

(with apologies to Will)

WINE, WINNING AND WHIST - September 27

Oliver Crawford was host for the third year of battle of the cards, and although many SBW members were busy packing for the long weekend, a small but competitive group fought it out for the annual 'Card Sharp' honour. Jo Robinson was the ultimate winner for the night, claiming the title from Frank Greenan who won both previous challenges.

Jo's children were the real winners however, with the prize for the night being a \$50 voucher to Luna Park. As for the Wooden Spoon Award.....I've developed that Western Australian disease and can't remember.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MOTIVATION AND FEAR the Challenges - October 25

Please note that the venue for Peter Treseder's slide night is the Bellarmine Room on the 3rd floor of St Aloysius College, 47 Upper Pitt Street, Milsons Point, (just down from the Clubrooms). As with previous occasions, we expect Peter's presentation to bring out a big crowd on the night which will be better accommodated for at the College. Don't miss this very special night with Peter.

MACPAC GEAR NIGHT - Tuesday November 14 (Note the night)

Join us in the Trelawney Room downstairs at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre next month to review the latest in outdoor gear from MACPAC New Zealand. MACPAC will be including slides on equipment testing in New Zealand's trekking country, in addition to discussing and demonstrating the latest gear. Always a good night whether you are a new member looking for your 1st tent or an experienced SBW'er looking at updating. □

Changed Telephone

Please note that my works telephone numbers are changed to:

Switchboard - 992 5400, my desk - 99254027

Jan Roberts

Apology

Our apologies to Reg Alder for the numerous uncorrected typing errors in his "Gordon Smith" article in the September issue. Ed.

Bike Safety

Not only does it make good sense, It's also a legal requirement to be properly illuminated when riding your push bike at night.

Riders must display a white front light, a red rear light and a red rear reflector. These are minimum requirements and will make sure drivers see you not feel you.

A range of bike lights are available from major supermarkets, retail chains, hardware stores and bike shops. Priced at around \$14 each, there's no excuse for not being seen. □

The September General Meeting.

By Barry Wallace

It was 2001 when your scribe, serving as chairman, called the 20 or so members present to order and began the meeting. There were apologies from Denise Shaw and Greta James. New member Shiela Speters was welcomed into membership in the usual way.

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

Correspondence, apart from the mass of commercial entreaties and reciprocally supplied copies of magazines, included a letter from a Kangaroo Valley real estate company regarding the Shoalhaven City Council's plans for future rural development. They were of course acting in a purely altruistic fashion in this, though there was some suggestion that they would be prepared to point out the possible benefits to effected parties. A letter from Gestetner drew our attention to an apparently overdue account, at 45 days. Brian Harvey had written to us accepting our offer of honorary membership. The Wespac helicopter rescue service has written thanking us for our donation and the recognition that it conveyed. Natural Areas Limited has written confirming our ownership of 500 shares and offering us the opportunity to write out our own scrip should we have the time and resources. Morag Ryder wrote concerning the recent outbreak of thefts from cars parked at Kanangra Walls, musing on the possibility of organising minders for cars parked during walks. Matters arising from the correspondence included an assurance that the outstanding account from Gestetner will be dealt with in the near future and some discussion of police efforts to apprehend the persons responsible for thefts from cars at Kanangra.

The treasurer's report indicated that we received income of \$1,288 spent \$9,490 and closed the month with a balance of \$1,668.

Unlike last month's report, where we went on, on, at a maddening pace at least twice to the walks reports, this month was a relatively placid affair. The first weekend covered was 12 13 14 August with Greta James leading a party of 9 on a walk re-routed from the Red Rocks area to Kanangra Walls due to the shortage of water at Red Rocks. The fates were not kind. Strong gale force winds over Friday night gave way to strong winds throughout the weekend as the party went via Pages Pinnacle Gingra Creek Kowmung River and Rootes Ridge.

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The September GM - cont'd from page 5

They returned to the cars around 1700 to find that they had been broken into and any items of value stolen. Wilf Hilder's Federation walk stages 11 and 12 is somewhat of a mystery. Some informants said there were 4 on the walk, others that the walk had been moved back two weeks. You can either write your own script or ask Wilf sometime. Tom Wenman's Saturday day walk in the Megalong Valley saw the 16 starters getting away at 0730 for what was described as a good day. Eddie Giacomel also reported a good day for the 15 who went on his Sunday walk from Evans Lookout to Perrys Lookdown and back via the Cliff Top Track. The party of 16 who went on Errol Sheedy's Sunday walk from Engadine to Waterfall enjoyed fine conditions and a good walk.

Oliver Crawford led a group of 9 on his Wollombi N.P. walk over the weekend of 19, 20, 21 August. They encountered some rain on the Saturday evening but otherwise all went well. Jan Mohandas deferred his Six Foot Track in a day walk to some other date. Bill Holland reported serious deficiencies with his Wahroonga to Mt. Kurin-gai Sunday walk. It seems the party of 24 were unable to procure coffee at Appletree Bay.

The weekend of 26, 27, 28 August saw Jan Mohandas leading 8 brave souls on his Gingra Creek - Cloudmaker stroll. The weather was hot, there was little water in Gingra Creek and there were fires in the distance to add to the excitement. There was no report for Maurie Blume's cycling day at Buxton Plateau. Laurie Bore led a party of 13 through fields of flowers in warm to hot conditions on his Little Beach to Box Head Sunday walk. David Trinder was ill so Greg Bridge took over as leader of the 15 starters who came to do the walk from Victoria Falls to Evans Lookout on Sunday. He re-routed the walk somewhat and details were sketchy but it did go.

Ian Wolfe led an extended ski touring trip over the period 18 to 29 August. The program got it wrong again! They went to NSW not Victoria. It seems the snow was better north of the border. The 4 member group spent their time making a crossing trip from Kiandra to Kosciusko in 4 days and visited Twin Valleys for a side trip.

The first trip on the Spring walks program saw Ian Debert and Oliver Crawford cancelling their trips to Kanangra and the Wollongambe respectively. Bill Capon saved us from complete failure on the overnight trips front by leading a party of 8 on his Morton N.P. walk. They enjoyed a lazy Saturday but paid for it on the Sunday, which turned out to be rather tough. Jan Mohandas led a party of 16 (or was it 21?) on his

Saturday day walk from The Pinnacles to Bluegum and return with side trip up Perrys Lookdown. The conditions were either cool or hot depending on whom one believes. It's all in the mind you know. Ken Smith's Sunday walk in the Glenbrook area saw a party of 28 sweating it out in conditions that were generally agreed to be warm. The walk was described as good.

September 10, 11 had Greta James leading a group of 5 on her Splendour Rock trip in excellent weather with cool, fine conditions. Their numbers increased to 7 on the return via Breakfast Creek as 2 intending participants, delayed by vehicle problems, re-joined the main party after coming in down the Tinpot track. Wilf deferred stages 13 and 14 of the Federation walk due to a mix-up over the necessity to book on certain train services. Jan Mohandas had a team of 9 gallopers away from Kanangra walls at around 0600 on his Saturday stroll from Kanangra to Katoomba. The weather was glorious but Dex Creek was reported as not flowing. Maurice Smith led 4 on his Saturday walk in the Lane Cove N.P. and Bill Holland had a mob of 34 out enjoying good weather on his Sunday walk to Tootie Creek and back. All of which was probably just a conspiracy to bring the walks reports to an upbeat conclusion.

The conservation report detailed some of the shortcomings in the NSW government's December 1993 "Christmas gift to our children" by way of wilderness declarations. The size of wilderness to be declared has shrunk to 113,000 hectares from an initial area of 350,000 hectares which was the surviving portion of 800,000 hectares assessed. The portions that are now proposed to be declared, survivors of a National Party assault, are small, fragmented areas. Some of the proposed declarations have been either lost in the melee or ignored. The last remaining wilderness officer with the NPWS has resigned. There appear to be no plans to replace the position. The opposition is to move a censure motion, providing details of the failures.

The Confederation report covered the successful AGM and Bush Dance held at Mudgee. There was also some discussion of Confederation's proposed insurance cover for affiliated clubs. It seems the public liability policy may have optional extensions to cover specified risks (such as Coolana)? There is also an optional sports injury cover, but details are sketchy to non-existent at present.

There were no matters of general business so we proceeded to the announcements. Once people had all that off their collective chests the meeting closed at 2101. □

The 1995 Gammon Ranges Expedition - (Part two)

Continued from August
By Bob Duncun

We resume the story on day six of this mid winter walk led by David Rostron.

Our plans at dawn on Thursday comprised the exploration of two canyons and then a high camp on Prow Point - a minor summit at the western end of the Blue Range. We walked down Rover Rockhole Creek a short distance and then up a side creek which joined it from the west. About an hour's walk up, this creek split into two tributaries.

The one on our right was Fern Chasm; our first objective. Entering this, we soon came to a slot canyon and a 6 metre dry waterfall. Immediately after climbing this we were confronted with a second larger fall, and this one was made more difficult by a large overhanging chock-stone at its top. It was therefore thought prudent for following climbers to be belayed.

Above this the chasm opened out into a high amphitheatre. There were indeed two or three hardy ferns growing in this amphitheatre, and in this desert country this was sufficient remarkable to make the name 'Fern Chasm' appropriate. A few of the party tried to proceed further by climbing the walls of the amphitheatre, but with little success.

On the way back, because it would make it easier to retrieve the rope, Wendy experimented with going under, rather than over, the chock-stone. She was successful and volunteered to be last down and rope retriever. Others also tried going under. Spiro found it easy; David and I found it impossible, because the hole had a sharp right-angle bend which required one's legs to bend forward rather than backward at the knees.

We walked back to the junction and then up the other creek, 'The Terraces', so named because its rock strata are horizontal and the creek rises in regular steps like a giant staircase. We found a pool and had lunch. The route ahead was up this creek till it closed in, and then up a side spur to Prow Point and our high camp. After lunch therefore, we filled our wine-skins with the brownish-black water and pressed on. The creek was indeed a magnificent stair case but we groaned under the heavy load of water. About halfway up, finding a pool with water which was slightly lighter in colour, some of the party emptied their wine-skins and refilled. The Terraces went up and up almost to the top of the

range. Geoff and I were in the lead at this stage, and upon climbing a small dry waterfall we came across two large pools of clear water on a flat stone terrace, just made for camping. We yelled back to the others to tip out their filthy water, but they did not hear us, and continued climbing under heavy loads. Once they reached us they decided immediately to make it the camp spot.

We dropped our packs, went a little further up the creek which soon flattened and became scrubby, and then climbed a ridge to Prow Point. The view was good, but thank God we were not committed to camp up here! The scrub on the ridge had been thick, with packs it would have been hell. The scrub on the top was even thicker; it was difficult to find a place to sit, let alone sleep. The wind was strong and cold. Substantial firewood was non-existent, but in any case only a pyromaniac would light a fire in such wind in such scrub. We would have had to eat uncooked rice and drink unboiled goat-knoblet water. We admired the view in the setting sun and then returned to our comfortable campsite on the terrace, had lemon and rum followed by a yummy meal, and then a cosy sleep.

This was the third of five occasions on which my guardian angel saved either me or the whole party from disaster. The first was when Qantas had no cheap flights to Alice Springs, the second was when 12 mm of rain fell after David had decided to come to the Gammons, and the fourth and fifth you will hear about later.

The next documented waterhole was Junction waterhole on South Italowie Creek, and it was to this that we set out on Friday morning. In what was now a familiar pattern, we walked down our camping creek (today 'The Terraces') a short distance, and then cut up a gully and ridge to our right and crossed the tops before dropping into the next gorge to the west. As we were already high this involved only a short climb. This next gorge, Streak Gorge, was remarkably straight and open, and we streaked down it till it was joined by a major tributary and became South Italowie Creek. At this junction we found Junction Waterhole: two large clear pools.

The scenery was magnificent, the campsite perfect, and it was a long way to the next known waterhole, McKinley Springs, but it was still only morning nibbles time and our leader began to fret. We had originally planned to make camp here and do a day trip without packs to McKinley Bluff or Mt. McKinley, but both seemed too far away.

Cont'd on Page 10



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Cont'd From Page 8 Eventually David decided to push on with packs towards McKinley Bluff and risk finding water en route. 'If we don't find water', he said 'we can always push on to McKinley Springs'.

In the previous five days we had generally been walking westward. Now we were beginning the homeward leg and walking south and eastward. South Italowie Creek is a wide flat river-red-gum studded creek and ran east mile after mile. It was the first long creek-bash we had done. At about 1 pm we reached the junction with Scree Creek and had lunch. After lunch we marched up Scree Creek and discovered how it received its name; it became a narrow slot with a 700 metre vertical wall of fractured rock on one side, a steep ridge on the other, and mountains of scree underfoot. Occasionally rocks fell from the walls above to replenish the scree. Bedrock was almost non-existent but miraculously, in late afternoon, we found one small dirty pool of water. This was the fourth intervention of my guardian angel; as the next day proved, McKinley Springs was still a full day's march away.

Miraculously also, we managed to find a spot amongst those broken rocks where, with suitable contortions, it looked possible to sleep. Spiro and Bill were anxious to erect the fly; I thought it neither practicable nor necessary. But I was wrong; that night the usual front rolled in, but this time accompanied by bucketing rain. Because of the rocks there was barely sleeping space for two and that space was on the weather side of the fly. Bill and I took the brunt of the storm and kept Spiro dry by sleeping on top of him. He was invisible but for his nose which protruded between our feet like a snorkel, and he didn't complain, wriggle, or snore once; I can't believe he slept either. Each time I turned in my sleep I imagined I could hear a flash flood approaching down the gorge, but then immediately realised that it was only the sound of the gale on the tops. I thanked my guardian angel that in an attempt to reach McKinley Springs we had not been benighted up there.

The next morning, Saturday, dawned fine; now Scree Creek was a necklace of clear pools. The previous evening we had seen goats wandering up and down the ridge on our left on their way to and from the waterhole. After breakfast we climbed this ridge which quickly led us to McKinley Bluff. McKinley Bluff is a high point of a 700 metre escarpment which overlooks the lower ground to the east. We would have to descend this escarpment to reach McKinley Springs.

But first, as a side trip, we intended climbing Mt. McKinley - an even higher part of the escarpment and

indeed the highest peak in this part of the Gammons. We walked a short distance further south to a point where a large creek had cut far back into the escarpment, so that the way to Mt. McKinley lay along a long horseshoe-shaped ridge. We left our packs and hurried along this ridge. But after a couple of hours we were only halfway there and realised that time had run out on us. Sheltering in an overhang from the still brisk wind, we ate lunch and then returned to our packs.

Now we had to descend the escarpment. It looked impossible, but our leader had spied a couple of goat pads and deduced a route. After perhaps half an hour of slithering followed by an hour of ridge walking we reached the headwaters of Pinch Creek. This at first ran through low hills but then cut through a rocky range as a box canyon. A little beyond the downstream end of this canyon was McKinley Springs: a small oasis of running water. Here, just on sunset, we made camp.

The trip was now virtually over. On Sunday we walked along the road across the Gibber Plain to Grindell's Hut. There the occupant, Mr. Alan Bailey, invited us in for morning tea. We stayed for two hours, and ate all his biscuits, but in compensation bought a few copies of his historical novel. Then after losing and recovering some of the party we walked back down Weetootla Gorge to within a couple of hours of the cars and made camp. On the way we all saw a rare yellow-footed wallaby.

The lower part of Weetootla was now a running stream, which meant that on Monday morning we could have a proper bath! Then it was a short walk to the cars and off on the long drive back to Adelaide. On the way out, as is only too easy to do after a trip seems to be over, my guardian angel relaxed, with the consequence that our Commodore ran over a large rock and destroyed its petrol tank. However, she alerted in time to ensure that the Commodore struggled onto the first town (Copley, population 55) before finally giving up the ghost. After a couple of hours David realised we were no longer behind him and came back to help. He could squeeze one more in the Camray but not everyone, and Stephen, Spiro, and Bill offered to stay and get back by light plane or other transport the next day. Stephen checked out the local hotel and booked a room for the night. After co-tenting with me for much of the trip he looked forward to his first undisturbed night's sleep, but found that Bill and Spiro were even noisier sleepers. We were all reunited, at Adelaide Airport on Tuesday evening. So ended a fantastic trip. □

Wenman's New Zealand Wanderings

For years the clubrooms of Sydney Bushwalkers have resounded with the legends of New Zealand trips long past. Tom Wenman's passion at the start was simple-to bring together eight other members to join with him in the New Zealand challenge. This group of nine-Tom Wenman as leader, Maurie Ward, Michelle Powell, John Hogan, John Riddell, Eddy Giacomel, Margaret Sheens, Jeff McIntosh and myself (ad)ventured forth to verify or dispel the myths.

Day 1

Our flight to New Zealand was smooth and uneventful. We set our base in Queenstown. It is a delightful tourist town spread around the edges of Lake Wakatipu and framed by a spectacular mountain range called The Remarkables. It didn't take our group long to discover the local supermarkets which were somewhat expensive but well equipped for "trampers". The challenge for our group was after the shopping expedition-trying to get nine people to choose a restaurant for dinner. Luckily John Riddell remembered a place from years previous and everyone felt well satisfied. By 9 p.m. we were back at the motel and had settled into the last minute packing routine.

Day 2 -Queenstown-Wanaka-Raspberry Flat-Aspiring Hut

This morning there was a great fluster of activity. Some people had difficulty getting out of bed due to the effects of a two hour time difference and John's effervescent joke-telling that ceased somewhere around the bewitching hour. There was also a last minute rush to find shellite. Nonetheless we were packed and ready to go by late morning. A hired minibus, a handful of maps, a trailerload of back packs-the adventure was about to begin.

Our first stop was the Conservation Service Headquarters at Wanaka where we registered our intentions. Aspiring National Park was an hour's drive from Wanaka over dirt road. We unloaded at Raspberry flat-a large paddock with a toilet and a few parked cars. There were cows grazing peacefully in the meadow. In the corridor between the mountains we could see our route along the Matukituki Valley. It

was asphyxiatingly hot. Huge mountains, real mountains, rose steeply on both sides. Cold glacial streams carved a blue grey path through the alpine meadows at their base. The heat rose through the valley.

Within a few hours we were at Mt Aspiring Hut. I wouldn't call the hut a wilderness experience. It had twenty beds. The place was filled to the rafters. There were gas burners, bunks and mattresses, a fireplace and two long drops (toilets). We quickly opted for the paddock near the hut. This way there were no crowds to contend with, only the cows. Apparently the cows had a fetish for stealing and munching the clothes of unwary campers.

Day 3-Mt Aspiring Hut to Cascade Saddle

Today was the day we had been waiting for, or so the theory went. Given the fine weather our leader had decided that we were to attempt the saddle a day ahead of schedule. We were up by 6:00 a.m. In the darkness Tom had accidentally cooked a little too much porridge. Even though John, Tom and I struggled with that final mouthful of porridge, a couple of hours later we were thankful for the carbohydrate loading that was to help us climb this 1800 metre mountain.

By 7.30 a.m. we were on our way. The track started directly behind Mt Aspiring Hut. It meandered gently upwards through the dappled light of beech forests. This route had been first explored and named by Major Bernard Head, an officer in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. In the early 1900's his party crossed into the head of the Dart from the Matukituki Valley via Cascade Saddle. I gave silent thanks to this explorer's adventurous spirit and his gift of opening up some of New Zealand's most spectacular countryside.

Before long the track was steep. Every 30 to 40 minutes we stopped to take in the views. Without warning we suddenly burst out of the Beech forest onto a sheer barren mountainside dominated by tussock grasses. It was not difficult to understand how treacherous this grass could be once it became wet. In parts the track was very steep and slippery even in dry weather. Every so often I made a desperate grasp for the snowgrass as my foot lost grip on the fine powdery schist. By lunch time we had reached The Pylon.

Ah...Glacier country!... Mountain country! Before us the breathtaking views of the Matukituki Valley. Behind us steep mountains swathed in moraine debris and swatches of till-covered ice. **cont'd page 13**



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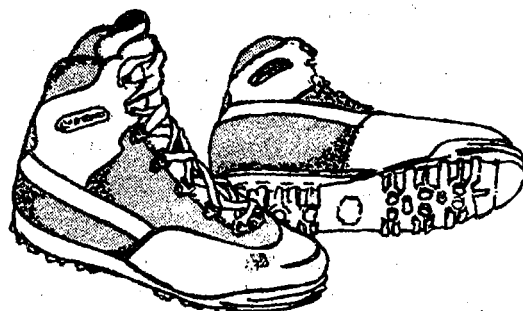


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cont'd from page 11 It took some time before our group could leave this magnificent lunchspot.

Before long we had replenished our energy stores and headed down a steep mountain slope towards a river in the far distance. The river required a 'boots off' approach. From the river there was a short walk over snow drifts, tarns and waterfalls. We ended up in a kamefield-Cascade Saddle. Everyone was quick to dump the packs and go exploring. From Heads Leap there were panoramic views over Mt Aspiring. A little way along we found an amphitheatre in which each one of us took up a prime seat to take in the majesty of Dart Glacier. For an hour we sat mesmerised by the sounds and spectacle of this untouched glacier.

Sunset. No one else about. The air filled with campsite chatter. In the background Dart Glacier tearing, plucking, grinding against the mountainside. Every so often the chatter would suddenly halt as the saddle reverberated with the thunder of yet another ice avalanche. Muted rays of lilac and pink. Beyond the saddle the silent stars sparkled over Mt Aspiring. For all my life I will never forget the magnificence of Cascade Saddle.

Day 4-Cascade Saddle to Dart Hut

On the fourth day we followed the Dart Glacier. This glacier was once part of an enormous ice system some 18,000 years ago. It terminated at Kingston, a place over 100 Km from Dart Hut. In the mid 19th century the terminus of the glacier came to within a kilometre of where Dart Hut now stands. Now the glacier has retreated a number of kilometres up the valley and has left a noticeable moraine ridge along the valley walls. We took the track along this ridge. In parts the ground was steep and gave way to scree slopes. Large boulders and debris dominated the descent to Dart River. Once we had reached the floor of the valley we could see how the river was formed from the dead ice of the glacier.

The valley was alive with the 'busy-ness' of the glacier. The slow creep of this ice sheet was imperceptible, yet, at its terminus, there were great slabs of ice dropping into the water. Icy torrents of water bubbled out of the base of the glacier tearing away at the rock. The water shimmered with the metallic glow of rock flour. The water and ice belted and pounded and ground away in a turbulent display of power. For hours we walked in thirty degree plus temperatures. Heat radiated off the moondust and till that lined the river's edge. We came to rest in a quieter

part of the river for lunch. Some chose to sunbake! (As if we did not get enough sun!)

After lunch there was a dramatic change in flora. Speargrass was a particularly nasty little plant with its spiked flowers and needle tipped leaves. There was the occasional patch of pineapple shrub and mountain flax. The only other time we experienced this type of flora was immediately above the treeline in the Dart and Rees Valleys.

Vegetation is clearly banded according to altitude. The lower altitudes are dominated by beech forest. These forests are abutted by a narrow, almost impenetrable band of shrubs and small forest trees. The small forest trees include celery pine and mountain ribbonwood and the shrubs include inaka, snow totara, mountain wineberry and spear grass. Above the shrubland bands are the tussock grasses. On a later daytrip some of us were able to experience first-hand the extreme density and "spiky-ness" of this horrible shrub layer.

Dart Hut was a "site" for sore eyes. We had been walking for a while through a hot dusty rye grass plain that seemed to go on forever. It was as if by magic that we turned the corner and caught our first glimpse of Dart Hut -just a swingbridge away. The hut nestled at the confluence of the Snowy Creek and Dart River.

Dart hut was commodious. The two John's and Michelle camped out and Oh Dear! what a night they had with the Keas. Michelle decided that these large parrots spent their infancy being fed steroids and attending annoyance classes. For some reason these mischievous birds were fascinated by tent pegs and any pieces of mobile equipment they could get their beaks onto. Keas apparently only inhabit the mountainous areas of South Island. Their plumage is a dull greyish green but the underwings are stunningly bright red. They have a highly variable diet and have created a bad reputation for attacking live sheep and gouging out the fat around their kidneys with their strong hooked beaks.

Day 5-Dart Hut-Day Walks

Today there were two groups of walkers. One group explored the Rees Valley while the other group attempted to explore Mr Humboldt. The two groups parted ways at the start of the walk to Whitbourn Valley. Our group aborted the attempt to cross the Dart River to get over to Mt Humboldt. The pylons of the swingbridge were unstable and the river was too icy and fast flowing. **continued on page 14**

continued from page 13 Instead we retraced our steps and explored the mountains behind Dart Hut.

We climbed an unnamed mountain. Our route was accidental and followed a steep untracked ridge. Initially we wandered through beech forest where our feet sank up to 30 cm into the moss and rotted tree trunks. Then we pushed and shoved through almost impenetrable shrubland before emerging onto a rather steep grassy slope. Here we used the strongly rooted snow grass to pull ourselves up sections of the ridge. The lunchspot was more level and we had uninterrupted views straight up the Whitbourn Valley and down the Rees Valley.

After lunch we developed the new sport of 'grassading' (as opposed to glissading). The snow grass was so slippery that I found it easier to slide on my bottom than try to control my jellylike quadriceps for the downhill run. Around 4:00 p.m. that day we were re-united with our colleagues who had also enjoyed the beauty of the Rees Valley and Bivvy Rock.

Day 6-Dart Hut-Rees Saddle-Shelter Rock Hut

On the sixth day we farewelled the Dart Valley and headed for Rees Saddle. The Department of Conservation had just finished a new bridge over the Snowy River. If the bridge had not been finished we would have had to negotiate a snow bridge just next to the bridge. We enjoyed morning tea at Rees Saddle. From here the track stayed close to a very steep cliff. The heat was almost unbearable through this valley. Our group kept walking through lunch hour to get to Shelter Rock Hut by early afternoon. Some couldn't resist a quick dip just 200 metres from the hut while the rest of the group bolted for the river after dumping their gear at the hut.

The hut was new. It had 22 beds and swarms of people-eating sandflies. From above the hut the Keas' solicitations were loud and clearly mischievous. Their

cries quickly led to a scramble to fasten windows and thrust any loose objects into the safety of the packs. At dusk they entertained us with their endless chatter.

Day 7 Shelter Rock Hut-Twenty Five Mile Creek-Queenstown

Our last day in Aspiring National Park went too quickly. After crossing the bridge across the river outside the hut we were once again walking through familiar beech forest. We had a leisurely lunch at the entrance sign to Mt Aspiring Park. From lunchtime until about 4 p.m. we enjoyed a brisk walk along a grassy valley to 25 Mile Creek and finally Arthur's Creek Hut-our pickup point. We loaded into the van and headed for Glenorchy. Most of us indulged in milkshakes, soft drinks and double Hokey Pokey ice creams before swapping into the bus headed for Queenstown.

Once back in Queenstown our group enjoyed a rest day before repacking and heading out for another four day trip. In this trip we explored the delights of Makarora, the Young River, Gillespie Pass, the Wilkin River and Lake Crucible...but more of that some other time.

It is now some months since our trip to New Zealand. There are often moments when a glimpse of a mountain piercing the clouds or a view of cattle grazing peacefully in lush green meadows brings a sharp pang of nostalgia. New Zealand is a wonderful place to tramp....full of all the challenges our group could have wished for.....Thanks again Tom for inviting us all to share your adventure.

Louise Verdon

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the rangers of the Department of Conservation (New Zealand) at Mt Aspiring and Dart Huts. They gave freely of their time to advise us about the flora, fauna geology and history of the areas that we walked.

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