



THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER is a monthly bulletin of matters of interest to members of The Sydney Bush Walkers Inc  
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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 on any Wednesday.

SBW WEBSITE= [www.sbw.org.au](http://www.sbw.org.au)

**President:** Wilf Hilder  
**Vice-President:** Tony Holgate  
**Public Officer:** Fran Holland  
**Treasurer:** Edith Baker  
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**New Members Secretary:** Frank Grennan  
**Conservation Secretary:** Bill Holland  
**Magazine Editor:** Ray Hookway  
**Committee Members:** Kris Stephenson & Roger Treagus  
**Delegates to Confederation:** Jim Callaway

# MARCH 2000

Issue No. 784

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The Sydney Bushwalker magazine is printed on recycled paper

**EDITORIAL****Klix in the Klub**

Recent correspondents in the Sydney Bushwalker have expressed concern at a perceived 'cliqueiness' in the SBW, a problem experienced by many new members of many organizations.

The truth is that the best way to get to know walking club members is to go on walks, preferably overnight walks, a fact delightfully illustrated, in the February issue, by William Midson in his article "A Breathtaking View", and in the recent comment, by a prospective, to the club committee, that *"she joined the SBW because it was a walking club where people socialized rather than a social club where people went walking."*

Club General meetings and Slide nights present minimum opportunities to socialize and for new members and prospectives to get to know older members, but the wine and cheese evenings such as that held on March 15<sup>th</sup> are programmed to encourage members to mingle.

Why don't you go along to the next one and make our new members and prospective members welcome?

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**NEW SBW CLUB COMMITTEE.**

A new club committee was elected at the annual general meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

Many members of last years committee volunteered to serve another term which facilitates a smooth transition, and there are several welcome new faces. Five positions remain to be filled including that of the essential position of secretary.

Details of the duties of committee members are shown on page 3 with a request for volunteers.

The composition of the new committee is as follows:

**Committee Positions**

<b>President.</b>	Wilf Hilder **
<b>Vice President</b>	Tony Holgate
<b>Public Officer</b>	Fran Holland
<b>Treasurer</b>	Edith Baker
<b>Secretary</b>	Position vacant
<b>Walks Secretary</b>	Carol Lubbers **
<b>Social Secretary</b>	Andrew Vilder **
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Barry Wallace
<b>New Members Secretary</b>	Frank Grennan
<b>Conservation Secretary</b>	Bill Holland
<b>Magazine Editor</b>	Ray Hookway
<b>Comtee members</b>	(1) Kris Stephenson** (2) Roger Treagus **
<b>Confederation Delegates</b>	(1) Jim Callaway (2) Vacant

**Non Committee Positions**

**Confed. Delegates.** (1) Vacant  
(2) Vacant

**Magazine Production manager.**

Fran Holland

**Magazine Business Manager.** Vacant

**Printers.** Kenn Clacher, Margaret Niven, Tom Wenman, Barrie Murdoch, Les Powell.

**Archivist** Belinda McKenzie \*\*

**Hon. Solicitor** Richard Brading

**Hon. Auditor** Chris Sonter

**Coolana Maintenance Committee:** Gemma Gagne, Patrick James, Don Brooks, Bill Holland, Barry Wallace.

**Search and Rescue Contacts.** Allan Donnelly, Bill Holland, David Trinder

**K H A Delegate.** Ian Wolfe

**Reunion Convenor** Spiro Hajinaketas

\*\* = New position occupant

□ □ □ □

## SBW CLUB CLUB POSITIONS VACANT

Volunteers are requested for the five positions not filled at the SBW Annual General Meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

1. **Secretary**
2. **Business Manager**
3. **Confederation Delegate.** 3. positions

The occupants of the first two positions do not necessarily have to be current active members and the secretary's position which is essential for the smooth running of the club, would be a good position for an older member who wishes to still play an important active role in the operation of the club.

**Interested members should contact our new president Wilf Hilder ASAP.**

An outline of the general duties of each position is as follows:

### **Secretary.**

Attends General and committee meetings to record and to read the minutes.  
Processes incoming and outgoing correspondence.  
Arranges the meeting Agenda.

### **Business Manager.**

Does not have to attend meetings.  
Solicits Advertisements from likely advertisers.  
Liaises with the editor re adverts and with the treasurer re payment for adverts.

### **Confederation Delegate.**

(3 Positions, one a committee position)  
Represents SBW at monthly Confederation meetings.  
Reports to committee and general meetings on Confederation matters relevant to the SBW and its members.

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## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION NOW DUE

The SBW annual subscriptions for the year 2000 were set by the Annual General Meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> as:

Single Membership	= \$37
Household membership	= \$61
Non Active Membership	= \$13
Non Active + Magazine	= \$26
Magazine only	= \$13

Edith will attend the club meetings for the next 2 months to collect subscriptions or they can be forwarded by cheque to the Treasurer at our Milsons Point Box number together with the completed form enclosed in this magazine.

Prompt payment will help reduce the secretary's work load and ensure that you are covered by club insurance and that you receive the magazine and walks programs.

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## CONFESSIONS ON THE ROAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT.

by Judy O'Connor

I have entered the Year 2000 with a guilty heart.

Way back in the depths of 1999 I had faithfully, even publicly, agreed to write an account of Bill Holland's two week trip to Cairns and the Daintree Forest and, also amongst my notes, that I was trying to throw out without looking, I saw some details about another notable trip I had intended to jot down.

So, in the hope that by clearing my conscience of these two matters, other, less pure deeds I probably committed during the year might also be wiped clear, I'm now casting backwards rather than forwards into the new millennium to see what I can remember.

Bill's trip went under the general stewardship of SBW member John Hogan who has been running his own "U Relax 4 we'll Drive" tour business in Cairns for a number of years now. Eight of us took off from Cairns in John's extremely well fitted out vehicle and spent the next two weeks enjoying a multitude of experiences and memorable campfires.

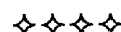
A highlight was a visit to the Aboriginal Quinkan Reserve, north east of Cairns where we did an out-of-the-way walk to see some spectacular Aboriginal rock art. We also visited, Percy, an ex-airline pilot and now the eccentric owner of Jowalbinna station, adjacent to the reserve, who lives a creative life painting and writing Aboriginal mythology in his rambling corrugated iron studio, surrounded by his pet (we hoped) dingos.

The further north we travelled, the more I understood the difference between

"Queensland" and "far north Queensland", or FNQ as the locals call it. We went through old mining townships and rich Australian history, to arrive at Cooktown where I was taken by the following sign: "925,000 corrugations to Cairns" pointing one way and "6,952,000 corrugations to The Top." pointing the other way. Very FNQ-ish.

The trip took in swimming, walks in the Daintree, Cape Kimberley and the Mossman Gorge. We saw curtain figs, waterfalls, canyons, frogs, flowers, brush turkeys bandicoots and, of course, snakes and crocodiles. We camped each night, except for a mid-trip stop in Cairns, and campfires, cooking and conversation were robust, wide ranging and always entertaining.

**Participants:** John Hogan, Bill and Fran Holland, Marian Plaude, Chris Wong, Zol Bodlay, Sarah Ashley-Wilson and Judy O'Connor.



### Walking does not happen in a vacuum.

Every walk seems to take on its individual flavour as the terrain and countryside unfold, and the group dynamics fall into place. No walks I know of fall more into this category than those of our own national-living-treasure-bushwalker Wilf Hilder.

The following recollections are from two separate walks last year (one around the Georges River and one on the south coast) but, through the sands of time, they have merged into one in my mind.

### Early warning sign

Perhaps it was having to get up at 5am to get to the meeting place in time, or maybe my bewilderment when I arrived at the car park to find we were right in the middle of a Buddhist temple or maybe it had all been preordained. Whatever the case, I was completely unprepared when Wilf strode up

and handed me the Buddha's book on *The Four Noble Truths* adding, "when the pupil is ready, the master will appear." I said I'd think about it.

We headed straight for a "Wilf-tunnel" ("I know it's here somewhere") and, of course, it was blocked by a wire gate with a big lock on it. With a twinkle in his eye, and a wicked smile on his face, Wilf squared his jaw and said he'd bring bolt cutters next time. For us, however, it was 'up and over'. Somewhere in the process the rain started falling. Wilf cheered us up by elaborating on the *Four Noble Truths* and engaging us in long and meaningful discussions about things like Right Mindfulness, Wisdom the Five Precepts and the Theory of Dependent Origination.

Later when we ran into a group of Tibetan freedom walkers coming up from Canberra, we knew this was going to be no normal walk. A spiritual awakening was definitely in the air. Wilf decided it was a good place for morning tea so we sat in the wet paspalum behind the guard rail on one of the busiest corners of the old highway eating our muesli

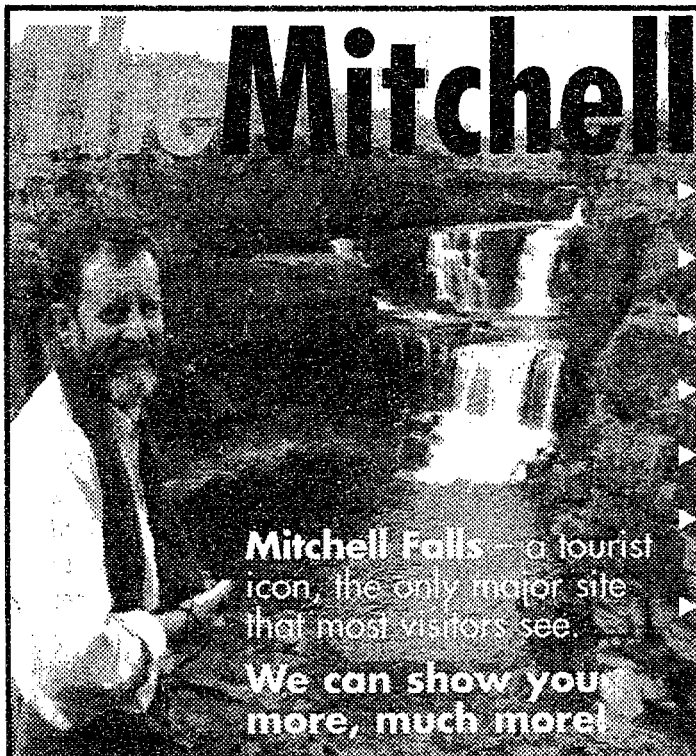
bars and turning our faces away from the steady stream of cars that went past just in case, as some sort of Karmic-payback, there'd be someone we knew in one of them.

The rain got heavier and Wilf wandered over to talk to the freedom walkers. Next thing he was on camera being interviewed by a television crew about a range of questions for broadcasting on who knows what airwaves. The record having been set straight, Wilf rounded us up and we started off again. Looking like the Phantom of the Opera, with his flowing poncho, handsome profile, striking hat with perpendicular feather sticking up at the front like a mast, Wilf led us on to the next step in our journey into our inner selves.

By lunch time the sun had come out and we took a skinny dip in a beautiful rocky swimming spot which Wilf told us was called Nirvana.

Obviously inspired by this, he cast his eyes over the natural beauty of the scene and, against a fitting backdrop of a towering rocky cliff, half covered (fortunately the bottom half) by the water, he threw us some

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pearls of wisdom on Acquisition, Attachment, Understanding and Craving as taught by the Dalai Lama. Who could resist? We were all overcome and, like hostages who have undergone sensory deprivation and intensive 're-education', we were ready, as one, to see it Wilf's way. And didn't this prove the point? Wasn't this pool called 'Nirvana', wasn't this a portent? Wasn't this meant to be? We'd arrived at the end of our journey already.

"Wait a minute," Wilf said. "I've just realised. The map's wrong. These people can't get anything right these days. This isn't Nirvana. This is middle-Nirvana. Nirvana's further up the river."

"Too far to go today," he said, before we could ask. "Never mind. Maybe I'll put it on the program another time. I'll have to give it some thought."

Well, at least it wasn't lower Nirvana.

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## CAIRNS STILL SPARKLES

by John Hogan

I have just returned home from a Lilo trip on the Walsh river to the west of Cairns with a group from Cairns Bushwalkers. This varied somewhat from the typical Wollemi canyon trips in that we came thundering down rapids, dodging trees and debris and generally pumping the adrenalin. The weather for the trip was absolutely perfect with hardly a cloud in the sky, temperatures in the high 20's and just a nice breeze blowing to keep things pleasant. So what is so unusual about this? Well just one week ago today this area was devastated by *Cyclone Stephen* with about one metre of rain falling in a period of a little over 24 hours. The flood line is clearly visible high in the trees and a good deal of debris litters some parts, but overall it is hard to imagine this event, which even washed away the railway bridge at Mareeba, was only a few days ago.

So I guess the big question is "what does it feel like to sit in the eye of a cyclone?" Well I must say first of all that although the eye passed right over us we were fairly well protected by the escarpment behind us which rises to about 500 metres and consequently the damage around us is considerably less than in some suburbs, particularly those around the airport and along the northern beaches where one of the pubs was totally unroofed and many massive trees were brought down. A big factor in their case was that we had already experienced a lot of rain only a few days prior to the cyclone and because they are so low the ground was very wet causing many of the trees to be simply uprooted. One of the saddest results is that our beautiful Flecker Botanic Gardens has bourn the full fury of the cyclone and has suffered indescribable damage. As a "Friend of the Botanic Gardens" I am on standby to help with the cleanup but it may be another week before it can even be made safe for volunteers to enter. There is no doubt that it will take a long time to recover to its former

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glory. The devastation may well have been even worse if "Stephen" had arrived a couple of hours earlier as predicted as this would have coincided with a king tide.

As we were spared the full force of the cyclone it is probably a little presumptuous of me to give you a description of the actual event but I will endeavour to give you some idea of my experience (and I must say that as a very dedicated North Queenslander it is an experience I had to have just as surely as a XXXX). The period leading up to it was very eerie as the day remained pretty calm, too calm, and it was perhaps difficult to convince yourself to make the necessary preparations which included throwing the plastic garden furniture into the pool and tying down anything which could become a missile. At very regular intervals we were given updates on radio and television and these are preceded by a siren noise that has been adopted as a standard warning, you certainly couldn't miss it.

By the time the wind actually hit it was already dark and everyone had candles and gas lamps etc at the ready. Again we were extremely lucky as although we had a short loss of power early in the peace we didn't lose it altogether until about 10.30pm. so we didn't have to sit through it in the dark. I'm sure this would have been much worse. Wind speeds of up to 150km/hr were recorded and with this came torrential rain. We had about 500ml within 24 hours so there was lots of flooding and some major landslips on most of the major roads, particularly those up to the Tablelands.

After perhaps an hour and a half of howling wind and driving rain everything went still for around an hour. *At this stage we were in the eye of the cyclone.* I have heard description of this phenomenon and all they say is true. Everything stops!

As the wind again picked up and the rain absolutely bucketed down at about 10.30p.m. we finally lost our power (again we were again very lucky to be reconnected by the next afternoon as many people had to

manage several days without power). Now with the cleanup well advanced Cairns again sparkles and is still a beautiful place to live - *and to visit!*

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### **Confederation Bush Ball.**

The **Confederation Bush Ball** will be held at the **Petersham Town Hall** on **Friday the thirteenth of October**. The theme of the ball will be: **'Friday the thirteenth'**. You are invited to attend in bandages, plaster on crutches or even on a stretcher.

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### **Bill Capon's Easter Blue Brakes walk.** Places reserved for newer members

Five places have been reserved by Bill, for newer club members, on his Easter wilderness walk in some of the most spectacular country in the Blue mountains.

Five days will permit the leisurely experience of a wide range of mountain gorges and ridges not easily visited in a normal short weekend walk.

See the program for full details.

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### **Next Month**

**Mt. Kenya, a natural gem.**  
*by Bob Stewart*

**The High Road to Ben Lomond**  
*by Ian Wolfe and Louise Verdon*

**Australia's Hut Heritage**  
*a Poem by Roderick Williams*

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## THE REAL MOUNTAINS OF NSW

by Dick Whittington \*\*

From the living room window of my childhood home, the hills in the distance were always alluring. I wondered what I would see if I were to ascend to their summits. These 150m protuberances in the Vale of Oxford in the south of England were the genesis of a lifelong interest in high places. Later, upon becoming aware of the rock peaks of North Wales I experienced an almost uncontrollable urge to climb every mountain that rose to 3,000 ft above sea level. Later, the yet higher summits of Scotland became the focus of my attentions.

It was therefore with great interest that I considered the map of N.S.W. whilst deciding to take a job in Sydney in 1973. The Blue Mountains, I noted, rose above 1,000m, and better still the Snowy Mountains above 2,000m. So, on my very first weekend in this new and exciting country I drove to Katoomba to see these giants of the dividing range. I confess that my first reaction was one of disappointment with this 'inside out' country where the basalt summits barely rose above the surrounding sandstone plateau. My enthusiasm remained diminished a few weeks later upon finding that the wonderfully sounding Mt Kosciusko was merely a high ridge of the main range. True, nearby Mt Townsend I grudgingly acknowledged did look like a mountain, and what was that double peaked monolith rising to the north? Perhaps there were real mountains in N.S.W. after all. My search for vertical topography led me to the Budawangs and Pigeon House, and then to the Warrumbungles and an ascent of that miniature Matterhorn, Tondurion Spire, a real mountain indeed. On a clear day from the summit of Kosciusko I noticed in the far distance an impressive prominence protruding above the edge of the western plains. This proved to be The Rock near Wagga, I later enjoyed an interesting scramble to its summit. A most exciting high scramble is that to the high point on the rim

of the Yulundundida Crater, in the Mt Kaputar group near Narrabri. From here one can see the telescopes of the Siding Springs observatory which must be at least 150kms away. Perhaps the most inspiring peaks are those of Mt Barney and Mt Lindsay (Lindsay I have not ascended) and the beautiful Mt Warning, also the great granite monolith of Bald Rock, all in northern N.S.W. Back to the Snowy, The Pilot rises supremely above all to the south of the main range.

So there are real mountains in N.S.W. and as time moved on I began to form an appreciation of those basalt caps, particularly the less accessible ones such as Mt Colong in the southern Blue Mountains and Mt Kerry in the Wollom, and after making the 1000m ascent of Nooroo Gable one is not inclined to question whether or not Guoragang is a real mountain. Kosciusko remains a disappointment but only because of its great popularity and ease of access, I am sure that Strezleki thought it was a real mountain after making the first ascent via the 1800m of Hannells Spur. My own favourite of the main range is Mt Northcote for its splendid views

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Regardless of the title of this article I feel it would be incomplete without mention of the ACT, which of course includes most of the Brindabellas, surely real mountains, the giants of the south include Mts Bimberi, Morgan, Murray and Kelly and an abundance of fine looking peaks rising above 1500m too numerous to list, and to the north Mt Gingera has a fine sub alpine summit region and Mt Aggie provides spectacular views.

Alas I have been remiss in not visiting the Bogong Peaks or the Tinderries, though it's nice to have these to look forward to. I still feel a quickening of the pulse when observing a distant high peak that I cannot immediately identify. Recently I stood on the verandah of the visitor centre at the Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens and observed a summit rising well above the surrounding terrain. It was near the coast and to the north of Sydney, it was Mt Yengo, I had no idea that we had what appears to be a real mountain so close to home.

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*\*\* A Nom de plume.*

## CONFEDERATION S&R NOTES

**General Search and Rescue Training** will be held at the Cataract Scout Camp on April 8-9 commencing at 8.30am.

### Activities will include:

Wilderness self rescue	bush safety
Helicopters	night navigation
Rescue radios	GPS receivers
Rescue coordination	crime scene

### Location

Cataract Scout Camp is off the Appin/Bulli Rd. Look for the turn off to Cataract Dam about 5km from Appin.

Take map (Appin 1:25 000 No.9029-I-S)

and compass and normal camping gear. Camping will be near cars and a kitchen will be available.

### Bush Regeneration at Burning Palms

Confederation are seeking volunteers for bush regeneration work at Burning Palms in the Royal National Park on March 20-24

Contact Jim Callaway on 9520 7081H  
or 0219 4379W

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### Rodriguez Pass Centenary Walk

*Sunday April 16th*

It is a hundred years since the major valley track from Govetts Leap to Evans Lookout was completed. On Sunday April 16th 2000 there will be an informal re-enactment of the opening ceremony. The only condition being that walkers dress and equip themselves appropriately for the year 1900! This event is being held by the Friends of Blue Gum Forest in conjunction with the NPWS.

**Time:** Meet at Govetts Leap at 8.30 am. The walk is expected to conclude at Evans Lookout at about 4pm.

**Transport:** It is expected that most participants will find their own way to Govetts Leap for the start. For those travelling by train, a vehicle will meet the 0810 train from Katoomba.

At the end, transport *may* be available at Evans Lookout to take people back to Govetts Leap (or to Blackheath). (Enthusiasts can of course walk back to Govetts via the cliff track).

**What else?** Your main guide for the day will be local identity Mr Eccleston Du Faur. During lunch there will be a brief ceremony during which the Hon J.H. Young, former works minister (now in opposition), will proclaim the track open.

**Cost:** Nil

Contact the NPWS Blackheath, if you are going, on 4787 8877 by Mon. April 10<sup>th</sup> indicating numbers going and whether transport will be required.

## AN EVENING STROLL ABOVE LOCH LOMOND

by Ian Wolfe & Louise Verdon June 97

One of the joys of being in Scotland in summer is the extended evenings. This allows one to visit the odd museum in the morning, have lunch at a Pub and then go for a pleasant 8 km afternoon stroll punctuated by a light supper before returning in the soft evening light.

From Balloch we crossed the River Leven, which is the egress of the Loch, and followed the directions of Bartholomew's "Walk Loch Lomond and the Trossachs" to Lower Stonymollan. This is a small cluster of farm cottages which marks the start of the walk. The way is up hill through a forests by a babbling brook. This gives way at Upper Stonymollan to hillside pasture complete with fairly friendly sheep.

The track climbs beside a row of old trees and if you walk slowly you will be rewarded by the antics of the rare indigenous Red Squirrel (as opposed to the inferior and abundant immigrant grey squirrel). In the

soft afternoon light these are delightful creatures full of a contradictory mix of inquisitiveness and extreme timidity. They are rarely at rest for more than a second or more and entertained us for a pleasant sojourn.

When one looks farther afield the views up the Loch to Ben Lomond and beyond are very pleasant. This continues as you gently climb up through the bracken to the top of the ridge. The line of the Highland fault also becomes more pronounced and thus apparent. The Old Red Sandstone in the south gradually gives way through the line of the upper Balquidder hummocks to the Dalradian Schist in the north.

From here the route enters a pine plantation as it crosses the ridge cap to emerge at a small hill which gives extended views across to the Arran Hills. This provides a suitable point for supper as one attempts to discern the "sleeping warrior" ensconced in the Arran Hills. Thereafter the route is retraced which allows the full majesty of Loch Lomond to be appreciated as you descend in the soft evening light.

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## Flinders Ranges: Heysen Trail

South Australia's Heysen Trail  
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## THE FISH RIVER CANYON NAMIBIA.

*From the End of the Line  
by Bob Edwards*

"Oh my God! She's Stopped Breathing!" We were stopped for lunch after a 500-meter decent into the Fish River Canyon in the Namibia Kalahari. As I ate my lunch I had noticed one of our group slip down next to Millie our guide. The news put me right off my noodles!

A few seconds later breathing resumed and we all began the task of resurrecting our dehydrated member. We had two options depending on how Jenny recovered. First to go back up as we had come down or to proceed to the 1<sup>st</sup> emergency exit some 15 kilometers away and then on to the end of the 90 kilometer canyon if Jenny was OK. Jenny progressed well that afternoon and we went to sleep with the promise of a walk to the emergency exit the next morning. We were by this time a half day behind in our 5 day trek.

The Canyon is walked between May and September. If you are too early you drown (This year several members of the Mountain Club of South Africa got trapped by high water in May), and if you are too late you BURN (They actually shut down the park it is so hot)! If you are just right then you walk through with water still flowing but no wet crossings. In late July we were just right. Unfortunately the winter also has the most extreme temperatures from 10 degrees at night to the 30s during the day. So it was freeze and burn.... But with a nice daily average.

To imagine the Canyon think Blue Gum forest without the trees and located in the Simpson Desert. The Canyon with year round water available (pools in late summer) is unique in this desert and its history of habitation stretches back to the early Stone Age.

The Fish River is Namibia's longest river and runs into the Orange River (the border between Namibia and South Africa) not far south of Ais-Ais the trail end. It is unlikely that it is the "second largest Canyon in the world," but it is long. The river covers 90 kilometres inside the park (and perhaps the same distance above the park) and is 80k plus of walking with the three "short cuts".

Our group consisted of Millie and Sandra our guides, my daughter Elizabeth and I, Jenny and Shirley two runners with no previous hiking experience. Lisa and Steve a young Irish couple backpacking southern Africa - also with no previous experience - also joined us. Our final member was Tony, a man of many experiences recovering from a serious stroke.

We awoke on the second day with Jenny looking pretty good. After checking our boots for scorpions we set off for the first emergency exit. The going was tough - despite only a few river crossings the route was close to the river and alternated among large boulders, rock hopping or sand. Our inexperienced members found the going extremely challenging. We drank the river which was OK but as Shirley put it "its dirty" (i.e. extremely "rich" in suspended dirt).

As dusk fell we arrived at Palm Springs (So named because of several clumps of exotic date palms supposed to be the result of German troop bivouacs.) The stench of sulphur filled the air due to the Hot Springs. Oh boy...Hot springs! With my SBW training I was naked and wet faster than a flash. That night around the fire all members were ready to carry on to the end, even though we were at least a half-day behind and needed to do almost 70 kilometres in three days. We were beginning to work out our differences and a lively barter in food had developed (Lisa and Steve ate no meat and Tony ate nothing else)

As we settled down for the night, I asked Millie about rain from the dark clouds on the Canyon rim. "One nice thing about hiking Fish River this time of year is that you don't have to worry about rain or tents".

The rain woke me up at about midnight! I quickly woke the others, pulled the waterproof ground cloth over my bag and checked the pack cover. Elizabeth adjusted her ground cloth and pack cover and went back to sleep. Jenny and Shirley tried to cover their beds and packs with their jackets and Steve and Lisa tried to climb into two black plastic bags. Fortunately the rain turned to drizzle and stopped after about two hours.

Day 3 was more of the same although the canyon opened up noticeably and the areas clogged with boulders became fewer and fewer. We managed almost 20 kilometres but had to set up in the dark. Besides the mountain baboons, we had our only animal sighting on day 3, a feral horse, descendent from those left in the canyon when the Germans fought the Namias in the 90s.

On Day 4 the country opened up considerably and we plodded on across the desert sands. After our lunch break I was looking for a tree to snooze under when I noticed Millie and Steve behind a rock hugging!! Wow... Lisa was really going to be pissed... But it was none of my business! Turns out, Steve had just started shivering and was passing out from the heat and Millie was trying to keep him warmed up. ... OK ... could have been!! The afternoon was spent again waiting to see if Steve would recover. About 4 PM, Steve felt like moving on. We had a full moon and plotted to hike by moonlight, but stopped about 6:30 due to concern about wild animals. (Those feral horses can be hell) Appropriately enough, we slept next to the German soldiers grave (died suppressing the Namias in 1905)

On Day 5 we still had over 30 kilometres to go. We started in the dark and pushed on over what was by now a wide plain with the canyon rim low in the distances. Again I

found myself at the end of the line pushing, prodding, pleading with the team to keep moving!!! A really long day – but no more heat stroke and by 5pm we staggered into Ais-Ais. After a steak (Tony was in heaven) and a soak in the hot springs spa we began to feel human again.

They say it isn't over until the fat lady sings and I guess its so. About a kilometre before Ais-Ais we came upon the first person we had seen, a substantial German lady standing in the river up to her knees and singing! She had obviously strolled down from Ais-Ais. What was she singing? ... I don't know. Maybe it was a German song extolling muddy water... Anyway the Fat Lady Sang.

"Into Thin Air" explores the issue of taking "amateurs" into the wild. The book was the account of the horrific consequences to the individuals and the guides involved in an ill-fated Everest expedition. Fish River Canyon is nothing like Everest, and possibly this is why the "problem" of amateurs is so prevalent. It is tempting because it doesn't look hard (especially if you have never done it before). It is almost impossible for guides and park services to monitor who is and isn't prepared, despite the Namibia Parks permit requirement of a Doctor's certificate of fitness. Guides and park services assume participants to be to be reasonably fit and to be honest about their inexperience and inability. And after all people HAVE A RIGHT to give it a go?!!!! Indeed one could argue that chewing off a little more than you can comfortably chew is part of the wilderness experience.

But it seems to me that at the end of the day there is an obligation by each hiker to obtain a sufficient level of knowledge of the hike and to personally understand the risks and requirements. Fish River is certainly not a place for a first hike and the literature available should convince people of this.... Those who care to read it. For me, it is not the irritation of carrying another member's gear because they cannot cope, nor is it the frustration of trying to explain how to wear

and pack a back pack. It is not even people refusing to follow instructions on how to avoid heat stroke. For me it's the danger that unprepared hikers put other members of their team in.

I don't know what we can do, but I for one am going to be better informed (No more blithely signing the indemnity on the Zambie Rafting). I am also going to make serious enquiries about future hiking companions.

Well that's how it looks from the end of the line.

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### THE BUSH NEEDS YOUR HELP

In 17<sup>th</sup> century England whole forests were torn up to make charcoal for steel production. The forests never recovered. Now the manufacture of silicon, the 21<sup>st</sup> century high-tech metal, promises to do the same to our threatened western woodlands beyond the Great Divide.

A WA/Japanese Joint Venture company wants to burn immense amounts of western woodlands and forests to make charcoal for use in silicon manufacture. The timber is to come from the Goonoo and Pilliga forests, at highly unsustainable rates. Their slow growing ironbarks are particularly at risk. Timber will also come from around Lithgow, the Upper Hunter and the New England tablelands.

The proposed silicon plant would be established at Lithgow and operate for 40 years. It would consume 190,000 tonnes of timber each year to make 30,00 tonnes of Silicon and 17,000 tonnes of hazardous silica dust.

The Goonoo and Pilliga woodlands are the largest remaining in western NSW where more than 70% of woodlands have already been cleared.

More than 30 species of endangered wildlife inhabit Goonoo and Pilliga. They are vital.

There has been no genuine community consultation and only a token forest assessment by the NSW government who now plan to grant long term contracts to allow logging at rates many times faster than the forests can grow. Such a regime will destroy the forests.

### YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE FORESTS FROM THE FURNACE

Please write or fax stating :

- ◎ Your total opposition to burning forests for charcoal and silicon metal products.
- ◎ your support for a comprehensive national parks system which permanently protects all the vital woodlands of Goono and the Pilliga
- ◎ your support for the use of alternative silicon smelting technologies such as low ash coal and plantation timber.

TO

- ◎ **Premier Bob Carr** (Fax 9228 3935)  
C/- Parliament House Sydney 2000.
- ◎ **Bob Debus** – Environment Minister.  
Member for Blue Mountains  
(Fax 9281 1115)
- ◎ **Your local member**

### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Western woodlands Project Officer  
National Parks Association of NSW  
PO Box A96 Sydney South 1235  
Ph. 9299 0000 or Fax. 9290 2525

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## **STOP PRESS**

### **Honorary Members Appointed**

At the annual general meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup> the club granted honorary membership to three long term members.

Ron Knightley. Joined 1945

Wilf Hilder. Joined 1959

Don Finch. Joined 1964

All three people have been very active members of the club, particularly in leading walks, and all have served on committee and have been elected president. (Wilf was elected at the meeting.) Ron who has held several committee positions, (even two at the same time), which included editor of this magazine in 1963, has been seriously ill and was not able to attend the meeting to receive his honorary membership certificate. We wish you a speedy recovery Ron.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **New President Installed.**

Despite the bad weather in Sydney, which did not get as far south as Coolana, about thirty members and families, including six ex-presidents, gathered at the club's property on March 11<sup>th</sup> for the club's annual reunion and to install our new president Wilf Hilder.

The bonfire and the entertainment were enjoyed by the gathering and a pleasant weekend was spent socializing.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Wine and Cheese at the clubroom.**

The wine and cheese night, organized by Social Secretary Elwyn Morris mainly to let members meet the new committee, went off very well in a crowded meeting room on March 15th. Our new president introduced the new committee members to the gathering, everyone wore stick-on name labels and all seemed to have a good time including several prospective members who had joined that night.

Congratulations Elwyn and let us hope that it becomes a regular post-election event.

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