



THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER



JANUARY 2007



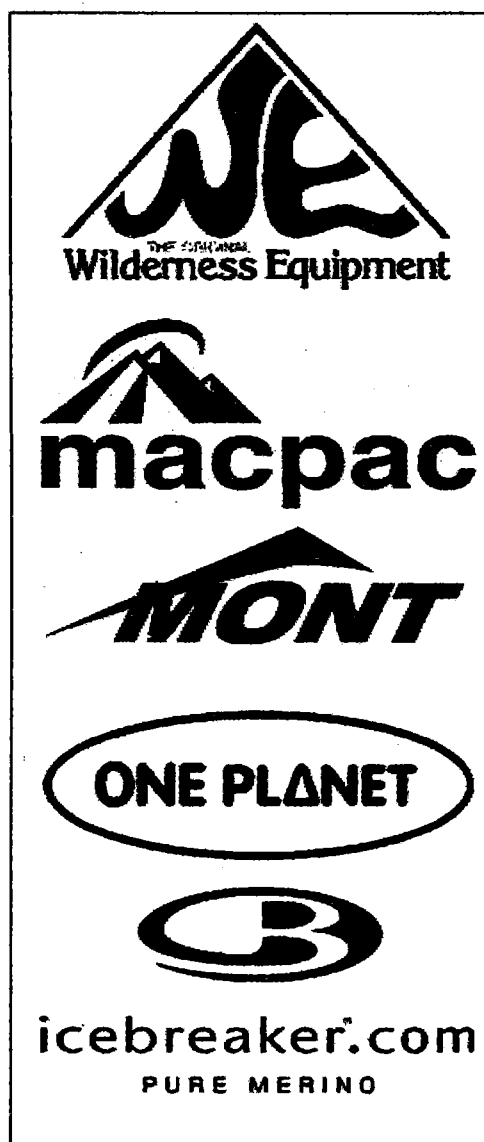
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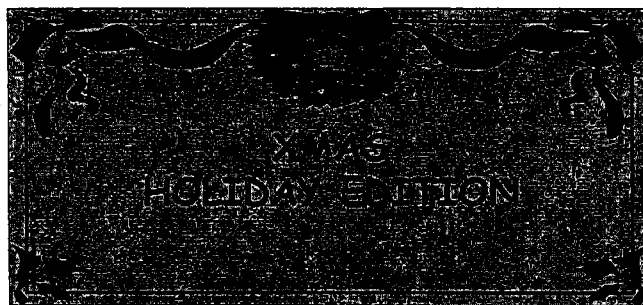
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858



JANUARY 2007 Issue No. 866

THIS MONTH INCLUDES.....

THE SYDNEY BUSHWALKER
is the monthly bulletin of matters of
interest to members of:

The Sydney Bushwalkers Inc
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Editor:

Pam Campbell

Production Manager:

Frances Holland

Printers: Kenn Clacher, Barrie
Murdoch, Tom Wenman, Don
Brooks, Fran Holland

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REGULAR FEATURES

	Page
President's Report - <i>Jan Roberts</i>	2,3
New Members Secretary Report - <i>Maurice Smith</i>	3
The Mid Week Walkers - <i>Bill Holland</i>	6
Social Program - <i>Kathy Gero</i>	14

SPECIAL FEATURES

Namaste from Nepal - <i>Emails from Susi Arnott</i>	8,9
Leaders Profile - <i>Ron Watters</i>	10

CONSERVATION

Coolana Report - <i>Getel Woodward</i>	4
Tracks and Access Report - November - <i>Wilf Hilder</i>	11
Conservation Notes - <i>Bill Holland</i>	12,13

ADVERTISERS

Alpsport	Inside front cover
Wilderness Transport	10
Wild Asia	11
Willis's Walkabouts	7
Paddy Pallin	Inside back cover

Website: www.sbw.org.au

About Our Club

The Sydney Bush Walkers was formed in 1927 for the purpose of bringing bushwalkers together; enabling them to appreciate the great outdoors; establishing a regard for conservation and promoting social activities. The Club's main activity is bushwalking but includes other activities such as cycling, canoeing and social events.

Our Walks Program (published quarterly) features day walks on most Saturdays and Sundays, some mid week walks and overnight weekend walks. Extended walks are organised in areas such as the Warrumbungles, Snowy Mountains, etc as well as interstate.

Our meetings start at 8pm and are held on Wednesday evenings (see Social Programme) at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre, 16 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli (near Milsons Point Railway Station).

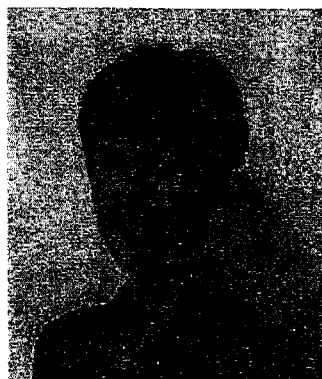
Visitors and prospective members are welcome.

Website: www.sbw.org.au

Office Bearers

Members are welcome to contact the following officers on Club matters:

President:	Jan Roberts
9411 5517 (h)	janc.roberts@bigpond.com
Vice President:	Margaret Carey
9957 2137 (h)	margaret_carey@bigpond.com
Secretary:	Greta James
9953 8384 (h)	gjam6037@bigpond.net.au
Walks Secretary:	David Trinder
tba	dt28@tpg.com.au
Social Secretary:	Kathy Gero
9130 7263 (h)	social@sbw.org.au
Treasurer:	Anita Doherty
9456 5592 (h)	alinta@bigpond.net.au
Members Secretary:	Fran Holland
9484 6636 (h)	fernband@bigpond.com
New Members Secretary:	Maurice Smith
9587 6325 (h)	newmembers@sbw.org.au
Conservation Secretary:	Bill Holland
9484 6636 (h)	billholland@bigpond.com
Magazine Editor:	Pam Campbell
9570 2885 (h)	pamela.campbell@bigpond.com
Committee Members:	
	Ron Watters
9419 2507 (h)	wattersr@bigpond.net.au
	Caro Ryan
9909 1076 (h)	justshootme@ozemail.com.au
Delegates to Confederation:	
	Jim Callaway
9520 7081 (h)	(no email address)
	Wilf Hilder
9587 8912 (h)	walkingwilf@bigpond.com



President's Report

Sydney Bush Walkers' 80th Anniversary celebrations next year is to include a historic walks program which will feature a day walk to the Blue Gum Forest on the 75th Anniversary of its Gazetting. The efforts

by Sydney Bush Walkers to raise the funds required to save the Blue Gum Forest during the depression of the 1930s is well known to most members, as it inspired the birth of the modern Australian conservation movement.

Today however, the Blue Gum Forest remains closed and stands forlorn in a bed of ash following the devastating fires in November.

Warnings of an imminent fire risk to the Blue Gum Forest were delivered to me via email from Chris Dowling while I was in Bhutan. Chris reported that during his walk in the Mt Banks area the day before, he'd seen a bushfire burning on the south side of the Grose Valley. The fire was being water bombed by helicopters and later that day, in spite of waterbombing, the fire had advanced further down the Grose Valley and was threatening the Blue Gum Forest.

Sadly of course Chris' concerns were well founded, and our much loved Blue Gum Forest and Grose Valley have suffered a severe burn as a result. In the following weeks there has been much controversy over the handling of the Blue Mountains fires, with the NSW opposition calling for an independent inquiry amid claims the Rural Fire Service mishandled a controlled burn. Countering this accusation the NSW Fire Commissioner claimed the burn successful as there was no damage to people or property!

Considering the severe damage to the Blue Gum Forest, many of us would not consider the outcome of the fires 'successful' on this basis alone, and debate will continue (as it should) on the handling of future fires. For now only time will tell how, and indeed if, the magnificent eucalypts of the Blue Gum Forest and its surrounds can recover from the fifth burn in 50 years.

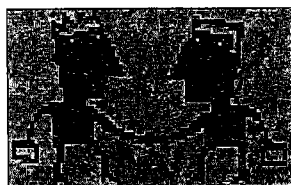
On the walks scene, the big dry continues to impact our walks program, and first reports from the New Year's extended coastal walks had participants lugging an extra 4-6 kilos of water on most days. The uncertainty of finding water on extended walks usually creates a very frustrating situation for even the most capable of walkers. After all the effort to reduce the pack weight to the most minimal, having to then throw

in extra kilos in water as a precautionary measure against finding none can take the joy out of those first few days walking.

Local information on water availability has proved helpful in the past, but even this information cannot be fully relied upon as conditions can change rapidly. SBW leaders will in the main take a conservative approach and have the party carry water just in case because you can't drink it if you don't have it! From all reports back so far this year, those participating still would not have stayed home. Hopefully though, for all the well known reasons - 2007 will bring with it more rain.

Hoping to walk with you soon...

Jan Roberts



New Members Notes by Maurice Smith New Members Secretary

Joining us as Prospective Members since my previous report are: Sarah Davies, Tim Green, Merilin Jovanovic, Kerrie and Michael Allsop. Please make these folks really welcome.

With the summer in full swing it is timely to remind all walkers to ensure that you carry plenty of water with you. Don't be caught short as dehydration is most unpleasant.

At the date of writing this column we have 123 prospective members, 71 of that number are of the female variety, compared to 52 males.

See you on a walk soon
Maurice Smith
newmembers@sbw.org.au

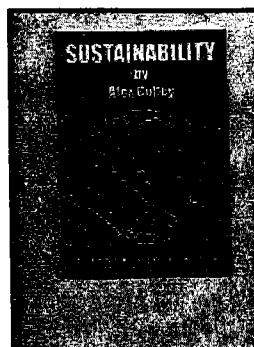
Have You Changed Your Address?

If you have changed your address or phone number recently, please contact by phone or email:

Members: Fran Holland

Prospectives: Maurice Smith

This will ensure that our records show your current address and prevent delay in receiving the magazine each month.



Book Review: "SUSTAINABILITY" by Alex Colley

I was delighted to receive a copy of this book. The book is well set out; near 90 pages of clearly presented text. The foreword, written by Geoff Mosely, pays tribute to Alex and welcomes his latest addition to a badly

needed debate on growth and sustainability.

Alex Colley is well known to SBW members. He joined SBW in the early 1930's and has held several positions, most notably President in 1941 and Conservation Secretary for 32 years. Alex was awarded an Order of Australia for his services to conservation in 1981. Today, at 97 years of age, he is still actively involved in conservation matters, as evidenced by this book.

The cover notes on the book most adequately summarise the book contents;

"To solve the environmental crisis gripping the Earth, we need all the understanding and wisdom we can get. In Sustainability, environmentalist and economist Alex Colley provides a plain-speaking, step by step description of the problems facing us from our damaged soil, air, water, forests and wildlife to waste, transport and population. Colley shows how environment is the foundation of economy. He condemns our destructive and self-defeating obsession with growth but points towards solutions and a sustainable future."

This book is very readable and most persuasive. I like the way the each chapter presents a different problem as a challenge, and then provides an answer. Alex is able to support his statements with well researched facts and references. He uses quotes from newspapers, government publications, other learned authors and environmental magazines with telling effect. He argues for solutions and believes that Australia is well placed to make a contribution to solving the worlds environmental problems by setting an example in sustainability. In the final chapter he recommends a complete reversal of government fiscal policy - taxation to target consumption rather than work, a carbon tax is seen as essential, increased taxes on higher incomes to reduce wasteful expenditure and surpluses devoted to environmental rehabilitation. Thanks Alex for a great book!

Bill Holland

"Sustainability is published by Envirobook; 7-9 Close Street, Canterbury NSW 2193. Copies can be obtained by mailing a cheque for \$20.00 to this address. Telephone the publishers on: (02) 9787 1955."

COOLANA REPORT - January 2007

The main report on Coolana for this month will be from the Composting toilet team as all the activity during December has been centred on this very important activity.

I did not go to Coolana in December however a couple of the Coolana committee members did and reported the following.

Over the Christmas and New Year holiday period about 20 members together with their families and friends spent varying lengths of time enjoying what Coolana is all about, beautiful surroundings, camping, relaxing, swimming and good company with fellow members.

A few brave souls did some mowing etc. to while away the hours which was very welcome as another member reported that the recent rain had not only increased the beauty of Coolana but also increased the weed growth, particularly on the Eastern flat. We will need lots of help in January and February to mow the weeds before seeding which we have done over the past couple of years. The January and February mowing being one of our most important weed reduction maintenance functions for the year.

Gretel Woodward

SONG OF THE BLUEGUM FOREST

by TARRO (1932)



Flowers of our forest - images of splendour,
Majestic creations - mightily of limb and smooth.
Growth ever fierce - valley bound.
Upreaching ever - hilltops to glimpse.
Playthings of vales - and of zephyrs,
Scorning them all - serene - immovable.

Parthenon trunks - flowerlike foliage,
Linking - entwining - amorous ever.
River caressed - sun caressed.
All seasons uniting - yielding strength to endure.

From centuries they came - to centuries they go
Saved - by miracle from Fire!
And by miracle from Axe!
To live - to wave - to shelter - to invite
The sons and daughters of generations to come.

Sing ye mighty Roots - invisible
Living muscles of Giants
Gripped teeth and tigerish - ever drinking River,
Sensing the lust of Storms - relaxing never.

Sing ye mighty Trunks - ye organ pipes
Silken and smooth.

Ye laugh at Summer blast,
Ye laugh at Wintry teeth.

Colannades fantastic - when moonbeam touched.
Fit parents for leaf and bough so wondrous.

Sing - ye boughs - ye twigs - ye leaves
Sing - and dance - and wave - and spin
To every vagrant breeze.

Wonderful green - wonderful trees-
WONDERFUL BLUEGUM FOREST!!

The Rolling Ground *by Ted Winter*

If you've gazed at a map of the top of the range,
To the north of Mt Tate, you'd have found
A place with a name that seems rather strange,
For it is known as the 'Rolling Ground'.

Now the 'rolling sea' is a phrase often heard
And what pictures it brings to the mind!
But the 'Rolling Ground' is a much rarer bird
And has secrets much harder to find.

I first heard the name from a tourer of fame
Who called at Pound's Creek long ago,
And his party, some lame, this section did blame
For delays and discomforts, and so
Oliver did say, as he went on his way
To the Chalet via Spencer's Creek
Despite many crossings he still didn't know
A single land mark of which he could speak.

Now I've been more lucky, on my many trips,
- Less than one in three have been clear -
But when it was fine the vista sublime
Took one's attention away from things near.
Instead of taking stock of each outcrop of rock
Or features which one might recall
One's attention does stray to those hills far away,
Gungahen, Grey Mare, Jagungal.

You are covered in rime in double quick time
When it's rough on the Rolling Ground,
And when generally fair, it is quite nasty there,
As many a tourer has found.

And it's not very nice to be all sheathed in ice,
And with one side frozen for sure,
Though it may not be nice, we still pay this price
For it's grand to be out on a tour.

And it's the way one must go, from the places you know
To the hills where the tourer is king,
To the huts that we know, miles away from a tow
And valleys where open creeks sing.
For all that I know, except for the snow
The 'Ground' may be more or less flat,
But the snowdrifts pile high, and cornices lie
With undulations, wind scour and all that.

We have set out all right when the day was quite bright,
A clear trip surely t'would be:
Perhaps we uttered aloud 'there isn't a cloud'!
And the spirits of that place replied,
By drawing a shroud, as if they avowed
Their home, no stranger may see.
Thus we suddenly find we are travelling blind

- Though we yell, we make little sound -
So we flounder about, and all of us shout
'To hell with the "Rolling Ground"'.
.

We have turned right around, just as others have found
Who don't check with compass enough
You waste precious time, turning circles in rime
As you dwell on the 'Rolling Ground'
And one wouldn't mind if the weather turned fine
And allowed you to check your mistake
But then it does snow and you never do know
How wide are the circles you make.

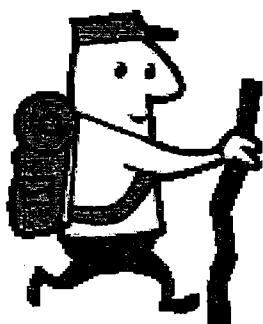
On a recent blind trip, after some time did slip
I came to a huge strange pole.
A surprise to me, there were two, there were three
With cross bars for gauging the snow
'Tis but vaguely I know, by the way the winds blow
That those poles stand on the crest
Where a creek aptly named, and so often blamed
Descends away to the west.

On the trips I've made since
I've failed even to glimpse
Those poles of which I do tell
If only I knew their positions quite true
As land marks they could serve me well
And should ever you gaze at the top of the range
And a solitary cloud does appear
You'll know you have found the 'Rolling Ground'
And that a touring party is near.

From 'Mountain Verse' A collection of Snowy
Mountain poems by TED WINTER
Copywrite: Kosciusko Huts Association Inc.



The Mid Week Walkers



Already, we have started planning some interesting times for the next few months. The dates are reasonably firm but bookings in the later months have to be confirmed.

January: (Fri 26th - Sun 28th) **Kangaroo Valley** (probably Coolana)

This is an activity already appearing on our walks programme. It will probably be relocated to Coolana due to low river levels. You are welcome to join us and perhaps add a couple of days either end to extend your stay.

February: (Mon 26th - Fri 2nd March) **Berrara Beach Cottage**

We have been here quite a few times but the location is so great for late summer and good opportunities for safe swimming and cycling as well as

canoeing and walking.

March: (Mon 26th - Fri 30th March) **Jindabyne Lodge**

Maurie Bloom has offered to host us again in the lodge where we had such a rewarding week last year.

April: Nothing is scheduled as yet with Easter and Anzac day limiting our opportunities. Perhaps we could plan for a 3- 4 day base camp in Yalwal, Kanangra or Budawang area.

May: Monday 7th - Fri 12th May) **Wallaga Lakes**

Jean Klov Dahl has offered to host this week at Regatta Point Holiday Park. A number of good walks (including Mt Dromedary) in coastal parks and forest.

Afer this there is the possibility of visiting **Yanga National Park** (out west) for June - August and possibly camping in several national parks up northern NSW over a two or three week period.

Here are the day (and evening) walks for the balance of the current walks programme. Please refer to the Summer walks Programme for more details:

Tuesday 23 January: **Sydney Harbour Foreshore**

Taronga Zoo wharf - Taylor Bay - Clifton Gardens - Balmoral, then bus back to Taronga wharf. An easy summer walk of about 8 km with swims at Clifton Gardens and Balmoral. Grade: Easy 8km

Wednesday 24 January: **The Rocks - Historic 'Houses' Walk**

Meet at the Club rooms for the annual pilgrimage across the bridge to the Rocks. Here we will visit some of Australia's oldest inns to sample their wares and soak up the atmosphere. The walk will finish up at the Quay for dinner, and walkers can then make their way home by ferry or foot.

Tuesday 20 February: **Berowra Valley (evening)**

Meet 6 pm at Hornsby Station and walk the Blue Gum Track to Leaders house at Westleigh for an evening barbecue.

The Mid-Week Walkers are an informal group of SBW members who have time to spare for mid-week activities, some of which are shown on the Walks Programme and some organised at short notice and advised by monthly newsletter. These can include easy to medium walks, perhaps some cycling or even a little bird watching as well.

If you would like to receive our monthly newsletter or join us on an activity please phone me on 9484 6636 or email billholland@bigpond.com.



FAST TRACK YOUR WAY TO FULL MEMBERSHIP

Come to the Coolana Training Weekend 17th, 18th February 2007

Receive training and pass your entry tests in Map Reading, First Aid and Bushcraft.
Spend a pleasant social weekend at Coolana in the beautiful Kangaroo Valley.
An ideal way for New Members to meet SBW entry requirements for map reading and first aid.

But it's not all work, there will be time to get to know our magnificent property,
to relax and enjoy the bush surroundings. Family members are welcome too.
We can assist with tents and other camping gear and there is a shelter on site.



SBW members are also encouraged to attend and assist with training and social activities around the campfire.

Activities start on Saturday morning and finish about 4pm on Sunday.
Phone: Bill Holland 9484 6636 (h) 0418 210 290 (m) billholland@bigpond.com
Patrick James 9567 9998 pjames28@bigpond.net.au

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Phone 08 8985 2134 Fax 08 8985 2355

NAMASTE FROM NEPAL - *Susi Arnott*

Seasons' Greetings to all you lovely people.

Today is my birthday, a fitting moment to send you all 'Namaste' again from Nepal! If you had told me even two years ago I would be spending my birthday in such circumstances, I would never have believed you!! The whole experience has a certain dream-like quality to it!!

The Teacher Training at the National Headquarters of SOS in Kavre was, I think I can safely say, a great success. My knowledge of teaching Languages other than English prove entirely appropriate to advise teachers of English in Nepal. We spent 5 days playing card games, Bingo, Snakes and Ladders, making flashcards, singing songs, discussing classroom management (an issue given their class sizes - minimum 40 - maximum 160, in some of the government schools), motivation, communication etc.etc.

I think the main thing I was able to impart was the importance of pair work and role play, i.e. having 40 kids talking at once rather than 1 talking and 39 listening. It was great to see how they responded and slowly let go of the idea that a teacher is still teaching (just as, if not more, effectively) even if he/she is not actually talking at the class 100 per cent of the time. Of course they can get away with that over here because the kids are so well-behaved - not the case at home!

Very humbling, and delightful, for me was the talent of these teachers. Within the group there were 6 published authors (self included!) - a nationally renowned poet, novelists, one teacher who has translated and simplified 6 collections of English folk tales, and one who has co-written the entire national English curriculum series. Many of them have read literally hundreds of English novels (one did his Masters on V.S.Naipal's 'Half a Life'). Not to mention the glorious singing voices, dancing and unbelievable dexterity on the bongo drums which became obvious each evening.

I didn't expect to spend so much time in fits of laughter. Firstly over the word 'bonk'. Apparently, here in Nepal, the word is commonly used to mean 'skip', as in 'skip a class'. It's a hang over from that antiquated English expression 'do a bunk', which of course sounds dangerously like 'bonk'. Tanka, the poet, informed the group that it was one of his headmaster's favourite expressions - he often admonished students not to 'bonk the class'. You can imagine the hilarity when I

had to explain to them exactly what that meant in Australia, and that as a teacher you'd be carted off to prison if you even contemplated such a thing! Needless to say, 'bonking' jokes continue for some time thereafter...

Another source of enormous fun was the after-dinner entertainment of singing and dancing, a special Nepali ritual called 'Dohori'. It's a sort of musical and verbal duel, often between a boy and a girl, with agreed stakes for the winner and loser - sometimes even marriage!! One starts by singing a poetic couplet to which the other must respond immediately.

Always flirtatious and romantic, they are usually extremely clever and cause people to roar with laughter and leap up and start dancing to act out the meaning (wonderful, lyrical steps reminiscent of Greek dance). If no drums are available, people drum on the table which creates an extraordinarily effective beat. I sang one in English, something along the lines of 'Here I am in Nepal, I can't understand at all, But it's good fun trying', which caused huge amusement. Then Kiran, with his beautiful honey voice, sang,

'I am very handsomer
You are beauty betterer
Please send me a letter'

To which I responded, 'I'll send you my daughters!', rushed out and got the wedding photo of the kids. Well, amid general swooning, it was however quickly realized that height was a problem, so Kiran's next couplet was,

'I am very shorter
But I fear your daughter
She is very taller.'

Much dancing and laughter followed!! The highlight of the conference for me, which was watching 20 Nepali English teachers making Frog Jelly Cups (from the Grandma Poss Recipe book), and Vegemite sandwiches (thanks, Gran, to your jar of Vegemite which just went round!!). The care and concentration as they poured the jelly (Aeroplane, brought all the way from Australia) into the half mandarin skins, and the nervousness with which they applied the vegemite (not to mention the efforts to soften the rock hard Nepalese butter) were truly a sight to behold. And as for the expressions as they ate same!! Many found the Vegemite very salty, interesting given how spicy their own food is, but the jelly was declared all round 'yummy'!!

NAMASTE FROM NEPAL - *Susi Arnott*

To end my rambling narrative, a brief account of yesterday's excursion into Kathmandu to extend my visa. I go in on the empty school bus with the expert Moondai, who, on a daily basis, negotiates bicycles (laden), pedestrians (deaf and blind), small cars (cheeky), motor bikes (suicidal), the odd dog or goat (lifespan definitely limited), 'Tuk Tuks' (crazy), other buses (bursting) and the odd trolley bus (lumbering) to pick up teachers and students from Kathmandu and bring them back to the school at Sanothimi (about 6 kilometres). His circuitous route on back streets bearing no resemblance whatsoever to the map in my lap, I am astonished when suddenly we are outside the Immigration Office. I turn my map every which way, trying to establish with Moondai exactly which direction we've come at it from - he scratches his head and says '2 and a half' plus a whole lot more in Nepali, from which I gather that he'll pick me up, right here, at 2.30 pm. Then off he goes to do his daily pick-up round.

I quickly discover that the Visa Office is, indeed, right there, that the Tourism Office next door has a loo (phew), and duly settle down to wait till the Visa Office opens at 10am. At 10.30 am a man unlocks the door and we all line up obediently and watch him wipe down every surface it is possible to wipe down - twice - except the glass partition which is so grimy you can't actually see the person you're talking to - before finally settling down to begin his job, at which point three or four others appear as if by magic to assist him.

Anyway ... paperwork duly filled in, I'm told to return at 1 pm, so I walk to Durbar Marg, passing on the way lepers begging and small grubby children with their hands out. Confronting, to say the least, and I find refuge in the convenient instructions given to Westerners - don't give to beggars, help only through organized institutions. Nice and easy. But I avoid looking into the eyes of this maimed humanity which makes Sydney tramps look like pictures of glowing health ...

Back at the Immigration Office, I collect my passport with relief at 1.45pm, and pop into the Tourist Police to report my jacket stolen from the pub in Lukla while I was dancing (yes - and great fun it was too!!) so I can claim it on insurance. In the office no fewer than 8 uniformed policemen are sitting round doing absolutely nothing (the national pastime here in Nepal); the sergeant on duty chats to me in excellent English about the time he spent in the UN serving in East Timor, hence in Darwin and Sydney to train, (and the cost of nightclubs in Kings Cross), and in Haiti.

He also speaks French, which he learned here in Kathmandu at the Alliance Francaise (well, they're in Arequipa and Cuzco in Peru, so why not Kathmandu in Nepal!), and suggests that I should give a day's English training to the Tourist Police if I have time before I leave Nepal. I half seriously agree and take his card . . . my life these days seems to be one surprise after another . . .

At 2.30 on the dot, Moondai and the school bus are back to pick me up. I clamber on, calling 'Namaste' to all the teachers and kids seated inside; we duly drop everyone off, and head back to Sanothimi . . . into the jaws of a monumental traffic jam. All the aforementioned frequenters of the roads are now going absolutely nowhere, and making twice as much noise as usual about it. Many rapid exchanges in Nepali, but . . . nobody gets angry. Nobody. It just doesn't seem to happen here!

After speaking through the bus window to a policeman, Moondai turns the bus around (no mean feat) and we head out behind the airport on a detour, through the slums (even worse, if possible, than the habitations on the main road), and into the back of Sanothimi by a rural sort of a route. One narrow bridge to negotiate in the face of endless oncoming traffic, but someone (not sure who) runs round the corner to act as a temporary policeman to stop them so we can get through. At last we arrive home, having taken over 2 hours to travel 6 kilometres, but no-one having uttered an angry word.

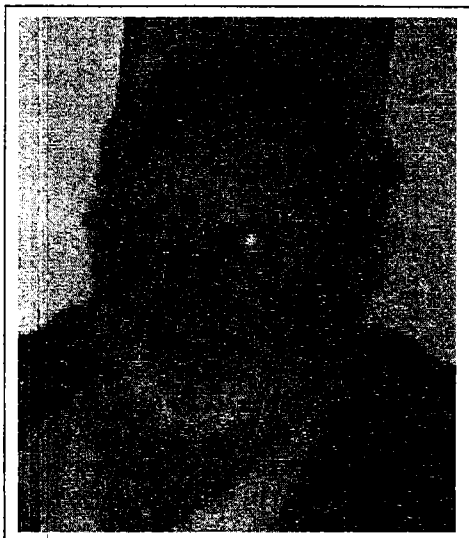
Tonight is my birthday party; it was due to start at 6 pm but has been put back to 7.30pm because of a power cut which will last until then. At least we got warning . . . I can't wait - wine AND birthday cake, and doubtless lots of singing and dancing.

Lots and lots of love to each and every one of you, and continue enjoying the Festive Season.

Namaste, Susi Ma'am xxxxx



RON WATTERS ~ LEADER PROFILE



Bushwalking inspiration

I really enjoy getting out into the bush. It has been my passion for over 50 years since I saw a colour supplement in a Sunday newspaper with photos of Bungonia Gorge and the Balancing Rock in the Wingecarribee River. Right into the bush, off track, scrambling over boulders in rushing creeks, rock scrambling through escarpments, navigating, wading and sometimes swimming rivers, sidling and ascending mountain tops. Beauty lies not only in the far distant but also in the close up.

I like a challenge and constantly seek out new areas and new routes. For me sitting back in the armchair studying maps, with string, compass and glass (or two perhaps three!) of red wine to stimulate the imagination is a delightful way to pass an evening. And then I put the results into practice. Sometimes with a surprise but memorable.

Walking Style and Philosophy

I lead circuit day walks of 6 hours or more plus breaks that combine a balance of scenery and involve all the skills of bushwalking. They provide a basis for transition to overnight walking and I would hope give future leaders an insight into what makes a successful walk and give them a sense of adventure.

My overall objective is a memorable and enjoyable day out.

And for me the pleasures of walking come not only from what you see but also from your companions. I encourage new members to walk with me. I enjoy hearing about their widely differing backgrounds and interests. Morning tea, lunch and dinner post walk are just as important as the walk itself. Around the

dinner table sharing experiences of the walk is a highlight. When unforeseen circumstances preclude dinner or reduce me to take away chicken on a cold park bench or late night in a truckers cafe that is a real blow.

Memorable Walks and Favorite Walking Area

My favourite walking area is the Southern Highlands ranging from the sandstone escarpments, waterfalls and rain forest of the Robertson/Kangaroo Valley area to the upper Wollondilly River and Nattai National Park out from Mittagong. Close up with koala near Russells Needle, Missingham Steps, the rain forest in the floating mist on a showery morning, McAndrew Falls in Macquarie Pass National Park and the kayak day to welcome Patrick McNaught back to the outdoors were top experiences among many. Watch 2007 for more kayaking and easy overnight walks to give new members overnight pack carrying experience.

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TRACKS & ACCESS REPORT - December 2006

NARROWNECK PENINSULA. Blue Mountains NP. I thought I had the history of the access passes nearly sorted out. The newly published book "Sacred Waters" by Dianne Johnson - the story of the Blue Mountains Gully (West Katoomba) Traditional Owners. Halstead Press, has sent me back to the drawing board with egg all over my face. Dianne's book makes it clear that Narrowneck was the preferred Aboriginal route from Burragorang to their summer camp site in what is today West Katoomba and redeveloped in the late 1950's with Catalina Racing Circuit (long closed) etc. Merv Cooper a very senior Gundungurra man told me that Narrowneck was the access used in his tribal trips to and from West Katoomba. Therefore Duncans Pass, which was the shale miners track of the 1890's at Clear Hill was first discovered by the Gundungurra Aborigines thousands of years ago. It was I believe one of the two passes on Narrowneck which was fairly easily negotiable by the men, heavily laden women and the children of the Gundungurra band of Aborigines. The other Narrowneck pass that meets this criteria is Red Ledge - which runs from Glen Shale Mine ruins to Corral Swamp. The third pass which meets the strict requirements of the Aboriginal mixed parties is Devils Hole which also links Megalong Valley with the West Katoomba Aboriginal camp. I base my belief on a detailed examination of the area some years ago and the reliable testimony of Gundungurra elder Merv Cooper. Research by Jim Barrett (CBC) has proved that the Aboriginal concept of Burragorang Valley extended from the Wollondilly Valley up the lower Cox Valley to the Policeman Range. Grand Country of course and not too far from that ex Army Tank near the site of Moodys Guesthouse. In the 1930's Moodys "Commodore Ranch" as it was called was advertised as being in Burragorang Valley and bushwalking was listed as one activity for the guests.

LAKE BURAGORANG continues to decline in area - the current level being below the 80 metre mark or some 37% of the gravity fed storage. Michael Keats - doyen of our Wild Dog Ranges - reports that Harrys River sorry, I meant the Jenolan River, was barely running in the central canyon section recently. You are warned that you can't rely on Mt. Solitary, Mobbs Soak/Swamp or similar water sources while the big dry continues.

"DAY WALKS IN THERABULAT COUNTRY". Michael Keats superb book on the Wild Dogs is out at last - great photos - marvellous research on fascinating facts you never dreamed of, and a very readable text (200 pages) with a list of references you could die for, let alone the superb indexes. Available direct from Michael Keats, 33 Livingstone Avenue, Pymble NSW 2073 for \$27-50 (including packing and postage) or from the Megalong Valley Tearooms where I understand Michael

has his own reserved parking space - must be one of the locals!

GROSE VALLEY: - Advice from the NPWS indicates that all the valley tracks such as Lockleys Pylon, Rodriguez Pass, Perry's, Victoria Falls etc. are still closed. The exception is the Grand Canyon track to Evans Lookout which remains open from Neates Glen. The Clifftop Lookout at Govetts and Evans are still open as is the track linking them. In Royal NP after the last bushfire we had to wait up to 18 months in some areas to get access to popular tracks, while the shack owners and fishermen only had to wait for a few days. Who said we had political clout?

FREDA DE FAUR - was one of Australia's most famous mountaineers having been the first lady to climb Mt. Cook in New Zealand and climbed a further 10 mountains, six of which were first ascents in New Zealand's South Island. She died in 1935 and this month a headstone will finally be placed on her grave in Manly cemetery. Both Marie Byles and Dot Butler were inspired by her exploits. Freda was the daughter of the famous Eccleston Du Four whose untiring conservation efforts led to the reservation of Ku-ring-gai Chase NP. Many thanks to David Springthorpe (CMW) for this information.
Wilf Hilder

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CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION NOTES

As I write these notes snow is falling in the Victoria's high country on some the areas devastated by recent major bushfires. This may reduce the immediate danger but does not ease the concern about the very early start to the bushfire season. Closer to home, much of Wollemi National Park was devastated by fire in November/December and the northern part remains closed. Our favourite area, the Blue Gum Forest was burnt in the Grose Valley fire in recent weeks and the whole of the Grose Valley remains closed.

Although the Australian bush recovers from fire the frequency and the intensity of the burning affects the diversity of plants and wildlife. Then there is the danger from fire affected trees dropping limbs and branches. Disturbance to the fire ravaged ground from walking and vehicles use can also retard regrowth of plants. This is why parks remain closed for long periods after fires and why we are asked to keep to walking tracks.

Whenever major fires occur the attacks on the conservation movement take a predictable path. The high country is said to be vulnerable because grazing has been stopped. As far as I am aware cows don't eat fallen tree litter and prefer fresh green grass rather than dry long grass. Opposition to regular hazard reduction burns in national parks is said to lead to fires of high intensity. From the regular meetings with NPWS/NPA I learn of the detailed attention given to fire management and prevention and the need to achieve protection of environmental diversity by pattern burning. If criticism is deserved in this area it should be directed to the funding of park management and limitations on staffing. Many critics overlook the fact that most fires start on private property and often from illegal burn-offs.

As bushwalkers we can do our bit to assist in fire prevention and control. Most parks have a ban on camp fires and this should be respected. Remember that if major damage results from an illegal fire you can be held personally responsible and our insurance cover may not protect you. Personally, I will not walk in a national park or wilderness area when a total fire ban has been declared as an emergency requiring assistance may divert park staff and emergency groups from essential fire prevention/control tasks.

There has been a great deal of correspondence lately regarding the Emirates proposal for the Wolgan Valley and a proposal for land exchange. Whilst I have some reservations about the Emirates plans my understanding from a NPWS/NPA meeting in October is that the land swap is advantageous for the park in that the area acquired for the Emirates is larger and better suited for the natural environment than that which is to be given in exchange. The Emirate proposal for a resort apparently covers previously grazed private holdings and may lead to an improved environment outcome. My reservations extend to use of helicopters on a daily basis and a proposed wildlife protection enclosure of the valley - although walking will still be permitted. *Bill Holland*

Conservation News and Comment

What Price Now?

In the early 1930s the Herald supported a campaign by bushwalkers to save the Blue Gum Forest from grazing and agricultural development. It was the first successful Australian conservation campaign to protect an almost pure stand of tall mountain blue gum (*Eucalyptus deanei*) on about 40 hectares of river flats in the rugged Grose Valley of the upper Blue Mountains.

The Herald visited the Blue Gum Forest again last week with a forest ecologist, Wyn Jones, and Ian Brown, former National Parks and Wildlife Service operations manager with overall responsibility for fire management. In 1994 Jones, then an ecologist with the service, helped to describe scientifically the rare and newly discovered Wollemi pine. He first saw the Blue Gum Forest more than 40 years ago. He has been involved with it professionally and as a bushwalker ever since.

He said the forest would re-shoot and regrow, but it

remains to be seen when and how. He predicted its immediate future would be decided over the next six months. That would depend largely on the vagaries of climate. Severe wind storms, a hot dry summer or even persistent rain, fungal growth and insect attack could all compromise the forest's ability to bounce back quickly.

More uncertain and potentially bleak is the long-term prognosis. Jones said changing fire regimes caused by humans could be further complicated by climate change, a recipe for more frequent and hotter fires. *SMH 11/12/2006*

Parkland Bushfire Disaster

NSW is facing a massive increase in bushfire risk because the State Government has created two million extra hectares of parkland but hired just one extra ranger to fight fires.

In the Blue Mountains, where fires have already

CONSERVATION

threatened several townships in recent weeks, there are just 15 emergency staff covering 250,000ha. Workers say they need 50.

A spokesman for Environment Minister Bob Debus said he was satisfied current staffing levels were adequate and National Parks had been given a huge funding boost this year. *Daily Telegraph 28/12/2006*

Trees Don't Start Fires

More management of forests does not necessarily make them less fireprone.

Don't be taken in when the anti-national parks lobby feigns concern about bushfire risk. Their latest contributions to the debate have been unscientific, insensitive and opportunistic.

Insensitive and opportunistic because while exhausted fire crews fight blazes across three states and people's lives and property are at serious risk, the logging industry launches another round in its attack against national parks to get greater access to forests for logging.

Unscientific because the more "managed" a forest is for logging, roading and four-wheel-drive access, the more fireprone it becomes.

The anti-national park lobby argues for greater access to our forests — not for logging, of course, but to prevent bushfires. Unmanaged forests, they say, are a firebomb waiting to explode; they need to be logged and burnt regularly to make them less fireprone. But letting loggers into our old-growth and native forests is like giving Dracula a key to the blood bank.

More management of forests does not necessarily make them less fireprone, and national parks less fireprone than areas managed for logging.

Parks are not "locked up" — they are managed as part of fire protection plans. Management burns are routinely made in most parks, and firebreaks are found in most of them or along their boundaries.

Contrary to popular opinion, most fires start outside parks and burn in. Of the most recent blazes this summer, 70 per cent started in state forests. This is consistent with the average, where about 70 per cent of fires start in state forests and burn into national parks.

Forests are ecosystems; they respond to whatever you do to them. Their response to regular hazard-reduction burns is for fire-tolerant plants to take over from fire-resistant plants, because they thrive in a regular fire environment. As a result, so-called hazard-reduction burns may, in fact, create a more fireprone landscape.

Extract from article in the Melbourne Age Newspaper by Gavan McFadzean 27/12/2006

Green Group Questions Wolgan Valley Resort Plan Changes

An environmental lobby group says changes to the concept plan for a six star resort in the Wolgan Valley near Lithgow are illegal.

The Colong Foundation says the original proposal by Emirates was located entirely on private land, but a modified plan has the resort encroaching within the Wollemi National Park.

The Foundation says the Environmental Defenders Office has informed it this is unlawful under the park's plan of management.

Foundation director Keith Muir says the plans cannot be legally approved by the State Government's Department of Planning.

"They shouldn't be eyeing off a nice piece of national park, which they say is degraded, and so if it wasn't a highly desirable piece of national park why would they not want to build on it?" he said.

"They want it because it's the best bit of the valley and they should keep on their own land.

"We would like them to indicate to the Emirates that they will withdraw their proposal until such a stage as they can lodge one which they can lawfully approve.

"They can't approve this proposal because it will be illegal, it will end up in the courts and it will get thrown out."

The Emirates Group has told the ABC it has been discovered there are pockets of national parks owned land in its planned 4,000 acre resort site.

Emirates hotel project manager Joost Heymeijer says the company is proposing a land-swap lease arrangement with national parks.

Under the arrangement, it would be allowed to build on already cleared parks land and Emirates would hand over more heavily forested private land to the parks service.

"We're realigning the boundaries of the property and yes a number of buildings will be placed on that piece of land," he said. "But it's not that we're completely moving a large resort into pristine wilderness areas."

The modified concept plan for the resort is open for public comment until this Friday. The company has also just submitted an application to the Federal Department of Environment and Heritage for approval for the development because it is near the Blue Mountains heritage area. *ABC 19/12/2006.*

SOCIAL NOTES

Hi Everyone,

I hope you all had a wonderful Xmas and have started to settle into the new year. If 2006 was not your best, then maybe you could make 2007 better!

The club, SBW, ended 2006 on a great note with an awesome Xmas party. A special 'THANKS' to all those who attended, making it a really fun event despite the early rain. The evening charged on till at least 9:30, with around 80 people turning up over the course of the evening.

January is a very 'social' time for the club, with many easy walks - the emphasis being relaxation. Ian Thorpe's Harbour Circuit walk featured lunch at Birkenhead Point (shopping and coffee), followed by gelato at Darling Harbour, drinks at a pub in North Sydney and dinner at the Bowling Club. Pamela Irving's walk featured coffee, ice cream and swimming stops. The Balmoral Picnic attracted around 30 people on a beautiful summer's evening. Just check the Walks program for more hedonism.

To counteract or undo any of the "bad" you may have done to your being of late, don't miss the February Social Night, featuring Organic Vitamins & Supplements. Prospective member, Kerry Iozzi will present this.

Keep hydrated
Regards
Kathy

SOCIAL PROGRAM

- 7 Feb Committee Meeting**
7pm Observers welcome
- 14 Feb New Members Night**
8pm Introduction to SBW for intending prospective members
- 21 Feb Organic vitamins and supplements** - will they help you up Perry's or even to compete the K to K? Prospective member, Kerry Iozzi has offered the services of 2 friends - a doctor and a nutritionist to inform us on the real health benefits of these products which are organic and contain phytonutrients.
- 28 Feb New Members Training Night** at the Clubrooms - NB early start
7pm An opportunity for prospectives to learn the basics of the art and science of cross country navigation using a map and compass. See Walks Program for more details.



Editor's Note

I hope everyone enjoyed the Christmas break! I would like to publish your Christmas holiday adventures in the February Magazine. I am sure there are some fascinating tales, so start forwarding them now!

This coming year I will continue to profile club leaders and will include articles from Prospective and new members recounting their first experiences with the Club. I also intend having a few competitions with prizes!

SBW members wishing to send in articles or reports for publication, please note the following deadlines:

- * Articles/reports are due by the **first Thursday of the month**. Where there are five weeks in a month this rule still applies eg the deadline for the February magazine will be 1 February 2007.
- * Printing of the magazine occurs on the **second Thursday of the month**.
- * Collation of the magazine occurs on the **third Thursday of the month**.

I would like to thank the Production Manager, printers and collators of 'The Sydney Bushwalker' for their ongoing support.

Pam Campbell, Editor

JOKES

Paddy and Mick are walking down a street in London. Paddy happens to look in one of the shop windows and sees a sign that catches his eye.

The sign said, "Suits £5.00 each, Shirts £2.00 each, Trousers £2.50 per pair"

Paddy says to his pal, "Mick, look! We could buy a whole lot of dose, and when we get back to Ireland, we could make a fortune. Now when we go into the shop, you be quiet, okay? Just let me do all the talking cause if they hear our accent, they might not be nice to us. I'll speak in my best English accent."

'Roight y'are, Paddy, I'll keep me mouth shut, so I will." says Mick.

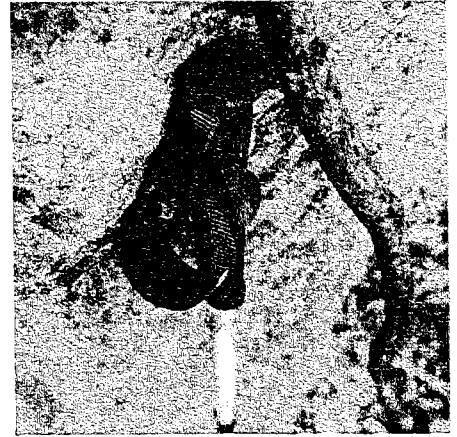
They go in and Paddy says, "I'll take 50 suits at £5.00 each, 100 shirts at £2.00 each, and 50 pairs of trousers at £2.50 each. I'll back up my truck and..."

The owner of the shop interrupts, "You're from Ireland, aren't you?"

"Well... yes," says a surprised Paddy. "How der hell d' y' know dat?"

The owner says, "This is a dry cleaners.

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