

The Wilf Hilder Storybook
 Compiled and
 edited by Roger Treagus

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Edited by Roger Treagus.

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Cover map: Blue Mountains Burragorang Tourist Map 1932.
This map shows many of Wilf's favourite walking areas and
'Clear Hill' where his ashes were scattered.



Wilf reaches the end of Peter Mulheran's old road from Wentworth Falls to Burragorang Valley in 2006.

THE WILF HILDER STORYBOOK

John Le Gay Brereton (1871-1933) was a member of the Warragamba Walking Club, which Wilf claimed was the first true bushwalking club in NSW. In 1908 Le Gay Brereton composed the Warragamba Walking Club Song, copies of which were given to those invited to join the club, which Wilf revived in 1966.

I am not sure if Wilf knew that Le Gay Brereton had a son called Wilfred for whom he wrote a poem, published in 1908.

A few verses seem particularly apt in light of Wilf's philosophy of life.

*To your freeborn soul be true –
Fling parchment in the fire;
Men's laws are null for you,
For a word of Love is higher,
And can you do aught, when He rules your thought,
but follow your own desire?*

*You will dread no pinching dearth
In the home where you love to lie,
For your floor will be good brown earth
And your roof the open sky,
There'll be room for all at your festival when the
heart-red wine runs high*

From "Sea & Sky" – Published Thomas Lothian, Melbourne 1908.

Contributed by Jim Smith.





A young Wilf Hilder sketched by his father Brett Hilder.



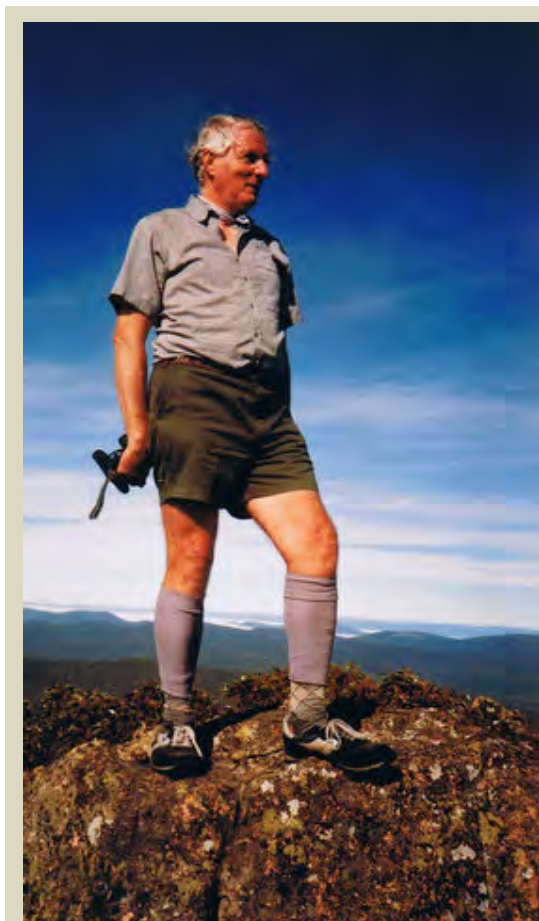
Introduction

The Sydney Bush Walkers Club, over the many decades of its existence, has had many members who were prominent environmentalists, highly skilled bushmen, prolific leaders, walkers with encyclopedic knowledge of the country and colourful personalities. Wilf Hilder possessed all of these qualities. He was also a larrikin in the traditional Australian sense with a healthy skepticism of authority. With all of these elements in play it is little wonder that there are almost as many stories about Wilf as there are stories by Wilf. Wilf led walks for over half a century so there is a vast population of walkers out there in the world who are well acquainted with the stories that he so vividly told and often repeated.

Stories about Wilf come from incidents that happened on specific walks and at specific times and may not necessarily be widely known but they give insights and extra dimension into Wilf's character. They are also often extremely funny.

So this to me is a collection of stories and observations about Wilf by people who knew him well and walked with him. The collection is split into two parts, firstly observations and comments about the man and his world, and secondly stories about incidents that happened on particular walks. Wilf's walks were rarely straightforward affairs so the potential for "situations" to develop was always high.

Roger Treagus



On Suggan Buggan (Alan Wells).



PART 1 – Wilf and His World

By way of introduction, Malcolm Brown's well researched obituary written for the Sydney Morning Herald's "Timelines"

Wilf Hilder 1934-2011

Wilf Hilder, veteran bushwalker, decided that walking, discovering the landscape of Sydney and the Blue Mountains and all its secrets, was not only the life for him but he should pursue it regardless of the official barriers. He once led a group of walkers, some new and inexperienced, on a direct compass line between East Hills and Campbelltown. Pity that the Holsworthy military complex got in the way. He led his group right through it, past tank traps, obstacle courses and artificial mine fields. Then the group encountered a parade of soldiers. The bewildered commander, assessing the situation, gave them a dressing down and had them marched out the front gate. But it was only a setback, such as when a bull ant stung him on a walk in the Colo-Wollangambe wilderness in the Blue Mountains, provoking an allergic condition and rendering him unconscious.

Hilder insisted on a right to walk through the Warragamba Catchment Area, bringing him into frequent clashes with rangers. But in the process he established a bushwalker corridor between Mittagong and Katoomba. Hilder once said he never disobeyed "No Trespassing" signs because when he approached them, they were always pointing in the other direction, so he never saw them.

Julius Wilfred Hilder was born on June 14, 1934, son of a ship's captain in the merchant navy, Brett Hilder and Mathalda (nee Nass). His introduction to the bush came early in life, when Marion Griffin, wife of architect Walter Burley Griffin, set up a play group at Castlecrag and took the children into the bush. The allure of the bush was to remain with him forever. Hilder went to Christian Brothers, Chatswood, then St Patricks's College, Goulburn. He started bushwalking as a teenager.

Hilder trained as a compositor and joined the NSW Lands Department as a clerk, where he was to remain. The Lands Department position fitted with his growing love of the wild, especially when he found places that had not been named. He explored the Sydney hinterland, including the Blue Mountains, the Colo River and Wollomi National Park. He revived the Warragamba Walking Club and learnt from veteran bushwalkers Dot Butler and Alex Colley. He discovered passes and routes into areas previously deemed inaccessible, as well as Aboriginal tracks long abandoned, and forgotten colonial routes. Some of the logbooks he compiled during solitary walks, such as from the Three Peaks Walk in the Blue Mountains, have been retained by the Mitchell Library. He wrote his name then as "Julius Wilf Hilder" or "Wilf (Cannonball) Hilder". Walker Roger Treagus said of him: "I always marveled that when following him through trackless wilderness areas with 'impenetrable bush' ahead of him, the bush would seem to magically part in front of him like the Red Sea did for Moses and a way through would suddenly appear".



In January 1967, Hilder married a mathematics teacher, Margaret Conway. They went on to have three children. They lived at Randwick and then Blacktown. The marriage ultimately ended in divorce. In the meantime, his exploration continued. In the Colo River Valley, looking for evidence of a survey route for a proposed railway, he discovered Perkins Cave, where a Mr Perkins, possibly a surveyor's assistant, had painted his name the previous century. In 1968 he rediscovered a pass that had originally been found by a mine surveyor called Wall. It became Wall's Pass. With fellow walker Jim Smith, Hilder opened up the Lindemans Pass Walk that linked Wentworth Falls to Leura. In the Colo River Valley he discovered an old surveyor's access track and named it after a friend, Bob Turner. In 1986, with Jim Smith, he rediscovered Bruce's Walk, which followed the course of a maintenance track for a power line that had been intended to go from Blackheath to Lawson, had been proclaimed a walk, then forgotten. Wilf considered himself a pioneering explorer.

Wilf's is the name behind so many thematic place names across a dozen 1:25,000 topographic sheets in the Greater Sydney area. All the musical names of the Upper Wollemi (e.g., Yodelers Range) and all the railway names around the Wolgan Valley and Newnes such as Rail Motor Ridge, Derailment Hill and Firebox Ridge are his. The Ettrema, Tallong and Caoura sheets are dotted with mining and convict names researched by Wilf and later endorsed by the Geographical Names Board of which he was a member. For areas around Yalwal, Wilf devised names for features taken from the first settlers as shown on the original Parish Map. For the river reaches on the Shoalhaven he enshrined the names of the canoeists who explored the then turbulent waters of that untamed river.

When the Army came into the office wanting place names on some of the proposed 1:100,000 sheets, Wilf happily obliged. Unfortunately he used a lot of names recognized by bushwalkers, but not by the establishment resulting in the 1:50,000 Royal Australian Survey Corps map compiled in the early 1970s having features with names such as "Growee Gulph," "Falsetto Gap", and "Blue Yodel Park", all attributed to Hilder. He called an area around Lithgow "Pagoda Country". There is now a Gardens of Stone National Park where the rock towers are generally described as "pagodas". Wilf was in his element and on discovery by the establishment was shunted off to a section where he could be less of an embarrassment to his boss.

Hilder served terms as president of the Sydney Bush Walker's Club and the Confederation of Australian Bushwalking Clubs. Along with Paddy Pallin, he pioneered nordic skiing in Australia, which he described as bushwalking on skis, a term well used by today's practitioners of the sport. He contributed some interesting chapters to such bushwalking classics as Pigeon House and Beyond, and Fitzroy Falls and Beyond. He wrote a book, published by the Springwood Bushwalking Club, that described hundreds of day walks right around Sydney. Hilder did not give too many directions. He believed that a competent walker only needed a few location points and some grid references. He classified the walks as E for Easy, M for Medium and R for Rough. Hilder was normally at the rough end, but as a result of his contributions, there was more understanding of it.



Wilf Hilder died on June 29, 2011. His funeral was held at Macquarie Park Crematorium on July 12, 2011. He is survived by his children, Nicole, Matthew and Rebecca, sisters Beatrice Yell and Tania Hilder, his former wife, and two grandsons.

Malcolm Brown



Wilf Hilder

A young Wilf on Narrow Neck or the Budawangs in the early 1960s.



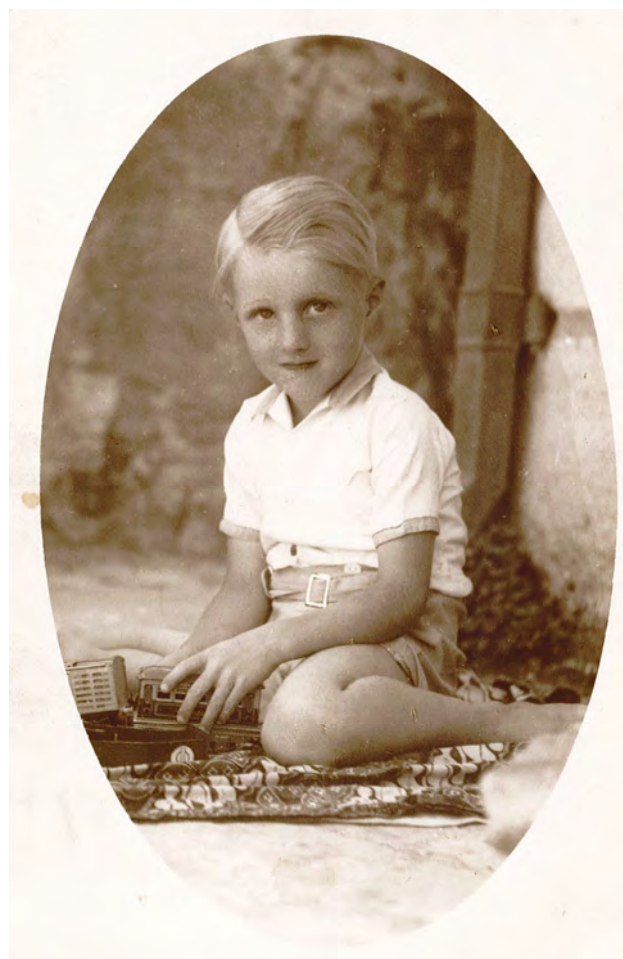
Wilf's sister,
Beatrice Hilder-
Yell wrote this
about Wilf

Julius Wilfred Hilder was a trail blazer in the NSW bushwalking world. My brother was passionate about our unique landscape and its flora and fauna. This was probably a result of being born in Castlecrag and spending his formative years on the rocky headlands. Our grandmother, Phylis, widow of the water colourist J.J. Hilder, bought three blocks of

land on the north side of Edinburgh Road from Walter and Marion Griffin in the 1930s. Her elder son Bim built a house on each block, one for Phylis, one for his younger brother Brett and one for himself. Born on the 14 June 1934 to Captain Brett Hilder and his wife Mathilde (Tilly) from the former Dutch East Indies, Julius attended a Crag playgroup run by Ula Maddocks. His playmates were Glyn Nichols, Karen Deans and Ula's daughter Dierdre. Marion Mahony Griffin, by then Walter's widow was convinced early influences on young children stayed with them for life. Julius, known as Wilf, could remember her taking the small group on short walks into nearby bush to show them the wildflowers. She encouraged reverence for the plants so they would continue to regenerate. This was at a time when conservation was unheard of and quite unthinkable to most people.

Phylis belonged to a wildflower society and had a wildflower section in her garden fronting the road. She showed him how to propagate flannel flowers in his own rocky patch in our garden.

As very young children (four and one year olds) in the terrible bushfire summer of 1938/9 our house was surrounded on three sides by fire. Brett was at sea so Bim came over and helped Tilly; we all got out through a window. We sat on the dirt road beside the fire truck with flames arching over us. The firemen were able to save the family home. Whenever there was a fire in the area Julius would turn up and join the bucket brigade or help beat out the flames with wet hessian bags or even a tree branch till the fire was extinguished. Until the early 1950s Edinburgh Road was only sealed as far as Sunnyside



Wilf at four years old with train set, which was a lifelong interest.



Crescent. It was the custom to wear old shoes as far as the tarred section then change into “town” shoes, leaving the old ones in a brown paper bag under a bush for the return journey.

At the outbreak of WW2, our father Brett, on loan to the Air Force, was sent to Point Cook, Laverton and then Bairnsdale and Sale in Victoria. Doctors deemed Gippsland far too cold for my older brother Julius. He was a sickly emaciated five year old after contracting Blackwater fever in New Guinea so he was sent back to Sydney. He stayed for 18 months with Roooma and Bim until we returned to Sydney and was always mindful of their care and many kindnesses to him. Often uncomfortable with a volatile father and three younger sisters in a small house, Julius would retreat into the peace of the surrounding bush where there was only a resident frill neck lizard, the odd snake and a nest of bulldog ants to deal with.

His solitary walks extended down to the bay and occasionally at low tide up to Willis Castle at Castlecove. Our house faced this landmark and it was always a source of wonder, as the owners were said to be reclusive. On his first few visits they set the dogs on him, but he was undeterred and they gradually accepted him. The elderly owner and former politician would often engage him in conversation, which seemed to please Wilf who was always sensitive to rejection.

As children we were given almost unlimited freedom to play in the bush and the two of us often went down the steep winding path to the bay and back naming the wildflowers on the way. Our younger sisters usually stayed closer to home. A ship’s bell would be rung to summons us back – the sound carried for miles.

When we were teenagers we went along to the Castlecrag Community Centre, originally built as a kindergarten, to the teenagers club held every Friday night with Glyn and Marie Nichols, Barry Duncan, Gillian Adams and many others. Here a leader from the YMCA taught us square dancing which was all the rage at the time. The hall was freezing in winter so sitting still was not an option. Music came via a hand wound gramophone and some old records donated by Michael Stoker and some other locals. By this time Julius (Wilf) had grown into a sturdy young man six feet three inches tall.

Julius (Wilf) attended the Christian Brothers, Chatswood, and then St Patricks College in Goulburn before training as a compositor. He had always hated his name as it lead to nicknames such as Brutus and Caesar at school so he added Wilfred by deed poll (after Wilf Carter, a famous U.S. bluegrass singer) and became known as Wilf.

Joining several bushwalking clubs Wilf became a respected and knowledgeable leader and served terms as president of many groups the last one being the NSW Confederation of Bushwalking clubs. He wrote several articles and booklets for these groups detailing hundreds of walks, an amazing task. He was also a founding member of the Nordic Ski Club, a cross country ski group.



In 1967 he married a fellow bushwalker Margaret Conway and they had three children, Rebecca, Matthew and Nicole, but the marriage ended in the early 1980s. Around this time he scrutinised many religions and philosophies as he searched for answers to his questions about life. Judaism, the Quakers, Buddhism and Theosophy were some. He became president of the Theosophical Society for a time.

After various positions he joined the Department of Lands and the Geographical names Board. This triggered exploration and discovery of many places and he was able to name several of them for army ordinance maps. He was fascinated with early history and was involved with the Australian Railway Historical Society. He did valuable research on the Blue Mountains Railways, light rails and early mining activities for coal and shale oil around Newnes and Glen Davis as well as other areas. I recall he was a passenger on the very last tram run in Sydney." A disgraceful decision to scrap them" he would say and shake his head.

Many amusing stories of his determined nature, including his refusal to accept authority and observing "no trespassing" and "keep out" signs along his chosen path, will now pass into legend. His quirky sense of humour and mountain top yodeling will be remembered as well as his fondness for bluegrass songs around the camp fire.

Although a volunteer on call with the Blue Mountains Search and Rescue team for many years, he rarely mentioned his part in this important service in all weathers. In fact he seldom mentioned his achievements, many have come to light since his death. Also passionate about bush conservation, he worked on several sites around Sydney. When he retired he joined the Wesley group for seniors, engaging in several activities including Scottish dancing. He chose a McLeod tartan kilt and tie because of the sky blue background and he discovered that those with viking ancestry including the Hilder clan were allowed to wear it.

Wilf was a member of the Freemasons and also the Grand Warden for several years. He was proud to hear that he had been elevated to "Past Junior Grand Warden" with the ceremony to have taken place in July 2011 but he lost his battle with cancer and died on the 9th of June, not long after his 77th birthday.

Mindful of Wilf's wishes, lifelong friend Ian Rannard from Northbridge arranged a rugged 12km bushwalk to a specific site for a simple memorial service to scatter Wilf's ashes at Narrow Neck in the Blue Mountains National park with the cooperation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The site looks out over the Warragamba Catchment area, the scene of many of Wilf's adventures and discoveries. It was a beautiful spring day when a bushwalking crowd of over 60 people made the walk a stirring tribute to an indomitable individual held in high regard.

Beatrice Hilder-Yell



Here is a summary (if one could call it that) on many of the things that Wilf did

Son of the Burns Philp sea captain Brett Hilder, born in Chatswood and “carried ashore” in 1936 at Burning Palms.

His first walks leader was Marion Burley Griffin – Walter’s wife (Castle Crag walks). She was a voluntary assistant pre-school teacher.

Scout, rover, group leader of Earlwood Scouts.

Apprenticed as a compositor printer for the Radio Printing Press and he later worked for “The Land” Newspaper. Shifted to the NSW Lands Dept as a Clerk – posted to Hay (which he resisted) and “Aboriginal Relics”, and then relegated to “Arrears Processing” for being “challenging”.

Loved country music, bluegrass, Scottish dancing & yodelling (whilst climbing hills – hence the Yodeller Range in the Wollemi).

Wilf was a great “joiner”.

Member of the Catholic Bushwalking Club – and challenged the power of the priests.

Member of the Bush Club, & Coast and Mountain Walkers (CMW), Warragamba Walking Club (Secretary), the Kamerukas (they were great singers), the Ramblers, and NPA.

Member of SBW since the 60s. Ran myriad walks, often exploratory – did lots of “Series” walks Coolana worker, committee member and president of SBW.

Walked Katoomba to Kanangra Walls and return in 24 hours and led 20 weekend walks on the walks program in 1962.

Winner of the first Paddy Pallin Rogaine in 1965 – earned the nick name “Cannon Ball”.

Cross Country Ski Touring since 1968, often with Paddy Pallin. Founding member (1975) and second president of the NSW Nordic Ski Club – produced a highly detailed map of the northern end of the KNP around Four Mile Hut.

Member of the Royal Australian Historical Society since 1964.

Founding member of the Budawang Committee – wrote three chapters on the history of the Aboriginals, early explorers and early bushwalkers for “Pigeon House and Beyond” and “Fitzroy Falls and Beyond”.

Member of the Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee.

Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs of NSW- Committee Member (Tracks and Access), president and active supporter of Bushwalkers Rescue Service (BWRS).

Coined the term “Pagoda” to describe the Wollangambe rock pinnacles.

Member of the “Geographical Names Board” - regular submitter of place names, with many proposals accepted – now appear on maps as ongoing feature, e.g., Yodeller Range.

Rotating president of Bushwalking Australia - honorary active member for life of SBW.

President of the Bicycle Institute of Australia.



Member of the Freemasons; examined the Quakers, Buddhists and the Unitarian religions; member of the Theosophical Society, an organisation promoting religious tolerance and president of the Sydney Chapter.

Noted for his robust approach to land ownership.

Apparently holds the record for total number of, and also value of, Water Board fines for trespassing, and also the record for unpaid fines although this may be apocryphal and other sources indicate he was never actually fined which shows how good a talker he was.

"Visited" Defence Land regularly.

Conversational style – Wilf would say things like "Our welcome was as cold as a Mother Superior's Kiss"; he was a corny pun teller, could easily spin a yarn and tell tall tales. He could be pedantic and ruffle feathers but his pronouncements were backed up by research and he would delight in robust argument.

Indestructible, indomitable, contrarian – but never boring. Someone who epitomized the spirit of adventure – feisty, fearless and forthright. Someone who challenged the status quo, the orthodox and conventional wisdom.

Woe betide anyone who mis-pronounced "Jagungal" It was "Jaargunal". Wilf climbed the mountain 19 times.

Compiled by Roger Treagus



Group Leader of Earlwood Scouts.



Kilted up.



Ray Jerrems provides some great insights in this contribution

Wilf joined the Coast and Mountain Walkers in about late 1960, walking with CMW on and off for quite a few years, whilst keeping his main affiliation with SBW. As Walks Secretaries of the Clubs he and I exchanged a lot of information, and listed joint walks.

From later comments by members of the Catholic Bushwalking Club I gather that he was a member there in the mid to late 50s, where he was known as “Julius” (his real name). He also suffered badly with arthritis in his knees in the late 50s but in 1960 he went on a strict salt-free diet and it disappeared completely.

His interest in the EYL (Eureka Youth League) dated back at least to 1960, when he would talk to his CMW friend Frank McKone a lot about his political views, and we would often hear “The Red Flag”, making the rendition of that song at his funeral service particularly poignant.

Wilf idolised the SBW “Tigers” of the 1930s and had read of many of their exploits in the SBW magazine, particularly Gordon Smith (who died in the Sandakan Death March) and Max Gentle, whom I met. This could have been the genesis of his interest in bushwalking history. It was in this area that he found me a very appreciative audience, and he would quote their exploits from memory.

He also did some of their walks, two of which I did with Wilf and Frank McKone:

☞ A day walk down the Grose River from Bluegum to Yarramundi, emulating a day (actually 14 hour) walk of Max Gentle.

☞ A four day trip from Glen Davis to Newnes via Mt Uraterer, the Capertee and Wolgan (possibly Easter 1961).

I also did a Three Peaks Trip led by him and a weekend walk from Katoomba to Mittagong (both were written up in the SBW magazine).

The Katoomba to Mittagong walk was calculated by Wilf to be 100 miles, fulfilling probably Wilf’s major ambition. He spent a lot of time meticulously measuring the distance on the inch to the mile military maps of the time and actually added on a loop at Bullio to make up three miles which his original route lacked. Only two of the party (Wilf and myself) did the extra loop.

The aura of 100 milers in Wilf’s mind originated from two sources. One was an SBW series of walks through Burragorang in about 1957 which Wilf knew about in detail. I gather that several walkers reached the 100 mile mark, and it was rumoured that Dot Butler had taken a wrong turn and had walked well over that distance. The other source was a 100 miler from Hilltop to Katoomba via Burragorang with Doug Dunnet (KBC), Mike Elphick (SBW) and possibly John Manning. On the same weekend a trio did an 85 miler from Picton to Katoomba, including Rolfe Walker and Fred Worrall (Hobnails).



Wilf spent a lot of time trying to walk “heel and toe”, wearing a pack, in preparation for the 100 miler and was able to walk very fast using a modified version, assisted by his long legs and a deceptively long stride. It was on Scotts Main Range after the first hour of the first morning of this walk that I realised that the only way I could keep up with him was to jog on the downhills, which at that stage I found very tiring. When I caught him he would soon disappear from sight again, and eventually I gave up. Comparing times later, we estimated that he was fifteen minutes ahead of me at Yerranderie. He was the only walker I could not keep up with, although it was only obvious on the 100 miler when he was able to get into a rhythm.

I was often puzzled as to why Wilf never tried to add on to his 100 miler. We lost a lot of time, only getting to the top of Cookem on the Friday night, and he finished at Mittagong Railway Station not long after 3 pm Sunday, so there was certainly scope for improvement. I was also puzzled as to why Wilf had not participated in (or initiated) a 100 miler in the mid to late 1950s when they were so popular. Perhaps it was the arthritis in his knees.

I remember Mike Elphick describing his 100 miler to me as one of the most boring trips he had ever done, my reaction was similar. The only person who seemed to like them was diminutive Dot.

On the “100 miler” my feet almost killed me on the second day, and I swore I would never do another one. Wilf tried on at least three occasions to do Katoomba-Kanangra-Katoomba in a day, to emulate Rolfe Walker and Barry Dunnett (the first people to do it), but to my knowledge he did not succeed. (Other contributors to this compendium said he did succeed – ED). I have a vague recollection that they told me that he tried to do the trip on the same day as them but his knees had cracked up when they saw him near Gabes Gap. He and I walked to Cloudmaker on one occasion, he went on towards Kanangra and I turned off along the Three Peaks route. This was probably the remaining trip which he would really liked to have done.

His first successful Three Peaks weekend trip with Norm Rees (CMW) set a high standard which he justifiably was very proud of, being one of the only trips where the party left the Cox in the Saturday morning and came back to it that night (Rolfe and Barry also did this, and I did it twice). Wilf was rather cheeky, because he loftily declared that camping on the Cox on Saturday after climbing the Three Peaks was a prerequisite to doing the Three Peaks, which rather conveniently wiped out almost all parties in the 1960s, including two led by myself. It also wiped out the only SBW trip (Ross Wyborn, Sandra Bardwell, Brian Harding) and the original first trip. He must have been the fittest he had ever been on the trip with Norm Rees because his split times were very fast. I blame Wilf for teaching me bad habits. I realised that the only way I could “outwalk” him was to jog on what he termed “tiger walks”, which I proceeded to do for the next decade, much to his disgust. He would often make snide remarks about my strategy, saying that it was not proper bushwalking. From my perspective our incompatibility of style was the reason why we never did a 24 hour trip together, although I have no doubt that he could have done them.



I had a lot of contact with Wilf when he was convenor of the Federation Tracks and Access Committee. CMW refurbished and improved the Carlons Head chains, and later cut the track off Folly Point, amongst other projects. Wilf kindly named a spur in the Ettrema area after me, as secretary of the Geographical Names Board.

Ray Jerrems



Young Wilf outside a hut in Shoalhaven country – 30 January 1961.



And there is this profile that Michael Keats wrote some time ago

Wilf Hilder - the Bushwalkers Champion and Living Legend. "Honest but devious," "You cannot be a stirrer and be popular." Not credos that most would use to describe themselves. There is a disarming directness and honesty about Wilf that creates polarity on contact. If you appreciate sardonic dry wit, the dispassionate double entendre then Wilf is your friend.

Supersensitive, humourless types should not apply for friendship! They simply would not understand.

Dip into the as yet unwritten bushwalking topographic lexicon and you will find a lot of entries attributed to "Wilf Hilder." This applies to generic terms as well as place names. It is Wilf who gave us the term "pagoda" – how on earth would you write up a walk in the Wollemi Wilderness without using it? Anyone who has walked in "Pagoda Country" knows just how apposite the term is.

Wilf started bushwalking very early in life – as a preschooler! His first walks leader was Marion Burley – Griffin, wife of Walter, the designer of Castle Crag and the National Capital, Canberra. Professor Jill Roe, historian elicited this piece of trivia from Wilf in a private discussion.

Wilf was a pupil at a preschool where Marion taught. Marion's passion for the Australian Bush meant that 'bush walks' were an essential part of the learning process for her young charges. Wilf was a keen participant and his love for the bush was nurtured from that time. He was hooked.

Wilf's father, a sea captain with Burns Philp, did not share the same passion although Wilf does recall being carried in on his dad's back into Burning Palms on the south coast in 1936. For his dad walking and picnics were recreation, for Wilf the bush was heaven on earth. It was a solace where he 'lived.'

Hilder senior was very concerned to see young Wilf get a real job, and not spend all his time messing around in the bush, so young Wilf started his career as a compositor with the Radio Printing Press, an organisation that produced a monthly journal for the burgeoning electronics industry.

The transition from compositor to research officer with the Geographical Names Board is too long to recount here. For seven years Wilf occupied this position, busy learning and absorbing as much information as he could. Wilf's noted capacity for an intellectual stoush was never far from the surface.

Wilf was one of the first counsellors to serve on the Blue Mountains Place Names Committee, representing the NSW Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs. Here he had frequent contact with Myles Dunphy, Cliff McIlroy and Bernie Dowd amongst others. Perhaps these associations sharpened and honed his acerbic wit and provided a blue print for much that followed.

On one occasion after a 'run in' with his employer he was offered a position in Hay (as close to NSW Public Service purgatory as you can get) as a grade 1 Officer at a higher rate of pay. Wilf



did not like the idea of going to Hay so he wrote a submission to his boss suggesting that if he was worth more money, why did he have to move to Hay to get it! He was roundly accused of insubordination, and yes, you guessed it he was moved to another area. This time the post involved developing and delivering training courses to do with Aboriginal Relics. His continued capacity to rub the establishment up the wrong way finally landed him in Arrears in Accounts. Somewhat ignominious, but then that is Wilf.

Wilf was a scout and went on to become a Rover Scout in 1942. His first big camp was in the Blue Gum Forest in 1955. His recollection was that the Blue Gum Forest was not all that impressive.

Soon after he became a solo walker. He kept away from the well-trod paths of the Blue Mountains and specialized in the wilds of Burrier and the Shoalhaven River.

In 1958 Wilf joined the Catholic Bushwalking Club but unsurprisingly soon found he had a clash with the chaplain whom he regarded as a manipulator, trying to match make suitable boys and girls. The establishment felt Wilf did not fit, however the younger clergy soon found themselves on Wilf's side.

A year later Wilf joined the Sydney Bush Walkers. Here he found a more liberal group and served on the committee. He was offered but did not accept higher office back in those days.

Almost a year later again he became a member of the Coast and Mountain Walkers and enjoyed many ventures with Col Watson whom he regards as a great navigator.

Four more clubs accepted Wilf into membership – the Kamerukas (they were great singers), the Ramblers, the Bush Club and the NPA. Although perhaps more correctly he asked them to join him! He revived the original Warragamba Walking club with membership by his invitation only. I think it had in the end twelve members. Perhaps the most famous club of all was the "Recidivists". When I challenged him on membership there was a slight inclination of the head, a twinkle in those piercing blue eyes and we moved on to discuss something else. The recidivists received frequent reference in his Track Notes prepared diligently each month for the NSW Confederation of Bush Walking Clubs. Wilf accepted the presidency of the Australian Confederation of Bush Walking Clubs. This was a position of enormous responsibility to the tens of thousands of Australian Bush Walkers. One thing I know for sure is that when it came to getting a message through to those who want to mess with Bushwalkers and their rights, no one could put a case more convincingly. You could also be sure that if there was an Achilles heel to be penetrated, Wilf would find it.

Michael Keats



Rob Barrie from the bushwalker rescue organisation has this view

I have done many walks with Wilf in SBW, mainly in the early 2000s. Of particular note was a series of walks we did to go the length of the Nepean/Hawkesbury system. It was being checked out to become a Great River Walk as an alternative to the Great North Walk. It was treated with some fanfare with mayoral receptions in Windsor etc. I don't think anything has come of it. (It is now partially established – ED). Wilf took great pride in being able to claim the right of bushwalkers to walk on surveyed roads even if they were closed off and signposted "Private Property Keep Out". More than once he was asked to get off a property. He was very peeved about the quality of modern maps. "Nobody field checks maps any more, and they now have left off lot numbers as well", he said. He was a great storyteller round the campfire and will be missed. He was also a member of CMW though he was not active with them. I did not know the nickname "Cannon Ball" but it certainly would have suited his style.

Rob Barrie



Wilf on a typical walk (Raf Byron 2003).



Vale Wilf Hilder -
reflections from
David Noble

I did not know Wilf very well but he was certainly well known and well respected in the bushwalking community. The first time I had heard his name mentioned was just after I had started bushwalking with Springwood Bushwalking Club in 1973 in connection with a Colo rescue.

Apparently, Wilf, whilst on a Colo – Wollangambe walk, had been bitten by a bull ant. Being allergic to their bites, he had lost consciousness and a rescue had been set in motion.

Such was Wilf's reputation at the time as a really strong bushwalker that it was ironic that he could have been stopped by something so small.

Wilf walked with various clubs, including one he had revived, and may have been the only member of – the Warragamba Walking Club. But probably his main club was the Sydney Bush Walkers. There, he had learnt the art of tiger bushwalking from people such as Dot Butler and Alex Colley. I can remember one time at the Mitchell Library looking at old summit logbooks from the Blue Mountains and seeing his entries. These were from the early 1960s. They were numerous and frequently indicated hard solo walks such as the Three Peaks. In those days he often signed his name "Julius Wilf Hilder" or "Wilf 'The Cannonball' Hilder". Many of those walks were given labels such as "Blue Yodel Walk No 11". This later led me to speculate that Wilf, who worked for the Lands Department, may have been responsible for the names on the 1:50,000 RASC (Royal Australian Survey Corps) maps that came out in the 70s – in particular the musical names on the Growee Gulph and Mt Pomany Sheets. Notable in this set of names is the "Yodeller Range" with its "Blue Yodel Peak", "Falsetto Gap" etc. These names never appeared on later Lands Department 1:25,000 maps.

As well as being a very strong walker, Wilf had an encyclopaedic knowledge of bushwalking places and bushwalking history. I only heard about this second hand from people who knew him well and had walked with him. In the Blue Mountains he was well known for his rediscovery of Walls Pass on Narrow Neck and the later work he did with Jim Smith in the opening up of the excellent Lindeman Pass walk that links Wentworth Falls to Leura.

He also contributed very interesting historical chapters to two great bushwalking books – "Pigeon House and Beyond" and "Fitzroy Falls and Beyond."

Lesser known perhaps, is the book of day walks he authored in 1969 which was published by Springwood Bushwalking Club. This is a classic bushwalking book and one for real bushwalkers. I have only a poor photocopy of the book and have reproduced from that the cover and excerpts from two pages to give you an idea of his style. It's more like a bushwalking club walks program rather than a detailed description of each walk. Wilf obviously thought that competent walkers would not need any more information than a few location points and a few



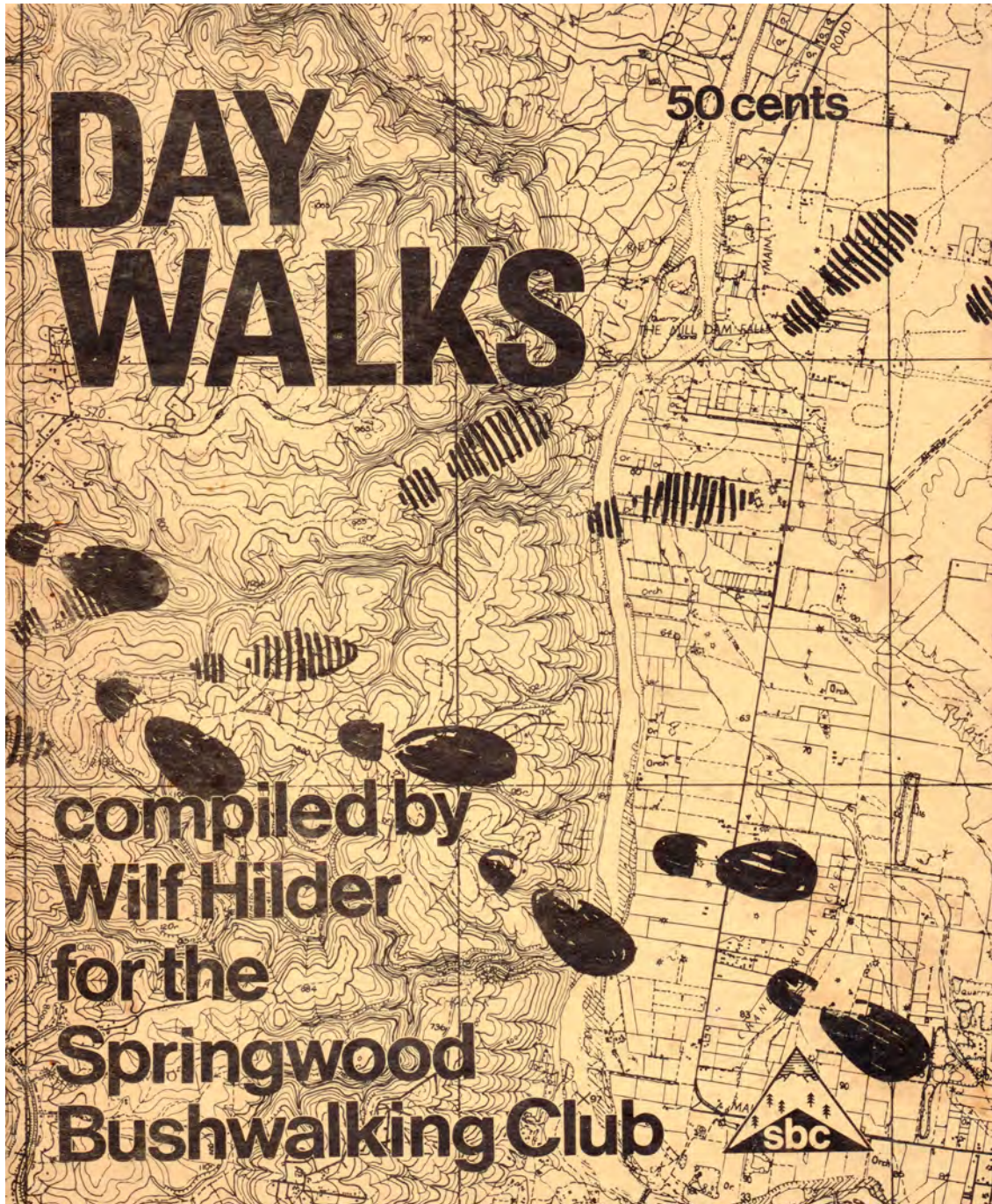
grid references. In my opinion he was right. After each walk is the distance (in miles) and grade – E for easy, M for medium and R for rough. The book contains hundreds of walks right around Sydney.

David Noble



Wilf on the Hassans Wall Track, Lithgow re-opening (1990)
(With Jim Smith and Graeme Holbeach).





KATOOMBA - Taxi or bus - O'Sullivan's Rd - Narrowneck Rd - Golden Stairs Pass - Old Tramway Formation - Ruined Castle Mine - track - Knife-edge Spur - Mt. Solitary - Korrowall Buttress - Repulse Pass (exposed ledge) - Korrowal Buttress - Rucksack Point - Fire Rd - Hayes Crossing (Cedar Ck) - Fire Rd - Medlow Gap - Deberts Knob - Clear Hill - Narrowneck Trig Stn - Oak St - Cascade St - Katoomba. 26m.R+

KATOOMBA - Taxi or bus - O'Sullivan's Rd - Narrowneck Rd - Golden Stairs Pass - Old Tramway Formation - Ruined Castle Mine - Ruined Castle (pass to summit on N. side) - Spur (281.271) - Cedar Cave (2807.2705) - Cedar Ck - Hayes Crossing - Fire Rd - Medlow Gap - Fire Rd - Black Billy Pass (2381.2785) - Black Billy Head - Fools Paradise - Narrowneck Trig Stn - Narrowneck Rd - Oak St - Cascade St - Katoomba 32m.R+

KATOOMBA - taxi or bus - O'Sullivan's Rd - Narrowneck Rd - Narrowneck Trig Stn - Clear Hill Cave - Duncan's Pass - Little Gap - Fire Rd - Green Gully Saddle - Fire Rd - Mitchell's Ck - Coachwood Pass (Iron spikes in green tree) (2515.2796) - Mitchell's Ck - Narrowneck Rd - Corral Swamp Cave (260.290) - Narrowneck Track - Diamond Spray Falls - Narrowneck Rd - Oak St - Cascade St - Katoomba. 19m.R

MT. VICTORIA - Taxi - Victoria Falls Rd - Ridge (268.535) - Cliff Edge - McKenzie Pass (288.535) - Old Shale Works - McKenzie Pass - Fire Rd - Victoria Falls Rd - Mt. Victoria. 13m.M

HARTLEY VALE - Railway Line - Main Camp Mine and Tramway Formation (256.566) - Coal Mine Rd - Coal Mine (272.561) - Unnamed Ck (275.553) - Grose R (rough) - Spur - McKenzie Pass (288.535) - Fire Rd - Victoria Falls Rd - Mt. Victoria. 12m.R

HARTLEY VALE - Hartley Vale Shale Tramway Formation - Shale Works Ruins - Lett R - Kangaroo Corner Ck - Spur (258.588) - road - Bell. 9m.M

HARTLEY VALE - Engineers Trail (255.554) - Grose R (rough) - Unnamed Ck (280.557) - Falls (pass left hand side) - Water-trough Hill - Bell Trig Stn - Bell Rd - Bell. 7m.M

HARTLEY VALE - Engineers Trail (255.554) - Grose R (rough) - Victoria (Falls) Ck - Victoria Falls - Victoria Falls Rd - Mt. Victoria. 12m.R

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - Ted Phillips, Frank Walford, George Matheson, C.C. Singleton, Myles Dunphy, Warragamba Walking Club.



And here, John Poleson provides another great insight

When I was seventeen I joined the Catholic Bushwalking Club. I had been active in Scouting and wanted to join a bushwalking club. My mother feared for my morals and insisted that it must be a church group, hence the Catholic Bushwalkers. In those days they were a very active group and I made some great friends. One of my friends was a big, powerful looking young fellow called Julius Hilder. That is his real name and he hated it. He was an avid collector of early country music and his hero was singer Wilf Carter. He was so keen on Carter's music that his friends gave him the nickname of Wilf. He liked it and it stuck. I have known Wilf as a friend for fifty three years. The other SBW member that walked with him in those days was Jim Calloway.

Wilf served an apprenticeship as a printer and went on to work for "The Land", a rural interest newspaper. He left his trade and joined the NSW Department of Lands in a clerical position. In later years he was appointed to the Geographical Names Board.

Wilf was a determined, honest person who spoke his mind. His membership of the Catholic Bushwalkers ended when he protested about the influence that some members of the Catholic priesthood had on the club. In those days the priest's word was law and their decisions overrode those of the committee. This was not to Wilf's liking and he mounted a strong opposition to their authority. Unfortunately he won the battle but lost the war and ended up resigning from the club. I think that he was a member of the Coast and Mountain Walkers after that and then SBW. Wilf was a great joiner and was a member of four or more walking clubs in Sydney. With the Warragamba Walking Club Wilf obtained permission from a descendent of the original club to use the name. Membership was by his invitation. The club got to twelve members eventually but no walk was ever scheduled.

In his early days he took a lively interest in the design of walking equipment. In those days the only walking boots were heavy hobnailed boots. Wilf conducted a number of experiments in improved footwear. Ripple soled shoes were the fashion and he tried them out on walks. The result was disastrous. He then discovered Dunlop Volley sandshoes and they became all the rage. He experimented with ultra light foods. There was a liquid diet supplement called Metrical. If you wanted to lose weight you ate nothing but Metrical for a few weeks. Wilf thought this was a great idea and started turning up on weekend walks with nothing but Metrical, the experiment didn't last long.

Wilf was a great historian and those of us who attended his walks always came home with some new snippet of history. He carefully researched all of his historical details and his facts were always accurate. His father Captain Brett Hilder, was a famous nautical navigation expert and his influence must have spread to his son. Wilf's navigation was nearly always spot on and he prided himself on his detailed knowledge of mapping.

He was a great joiner and his interests were many and varied. Nordic Skiing, cycling, Scottish dancing, Freemasonry, bluegrass music, Australian folklore were just some of his interests. Deep down he was a spiritual person who conducted a lifetime search for the deeper meaning



of life. He investigated many religions and philosophies. He looked into the Quakers, Buddhists and the Unitarian religions.

He joined the Theosophical Society, an organisation promoting religious tolerance. He remained a member and became the Sydney President. He had been born a Catholic and had a deep respect for its basic tenets but being Wilf he couldn't stand its Vatican dictatorship and lack of personal freedom. He was an original thinker and a rebel. Wilf did not suffer fools gladly.

Wilf regularly spent Christmas at our place with Lynne and our family. They liked him and enjoyed his company and were all saddened to watch his gradual decline. His last years were painful as the illness got worse. He is at rest now but I will miss his friendship. My own walking days have declined due to a spinal cancer that did a lot of damage. Fortunately, that cancer is now in remission. I only wish that the same thing could have happened to him. I frequently offered to drive him down to Royal National Park for a picnic and short walk. Even that was too much for him and he always declined.....Rest in peace old mate, your friends will miss you.

John Poleson



A young Wilf and a misplaced traffic sign on Cloudmaker.



Here is a tribute from George Elliott from CMW and Workers Education Association (WEA) Ramblers about Wilf's influence on CMW and his work with the Budawang Committee

Wilf had a long association with the Budawang Committee. He joined Coast and Mountain Walkers in the late 1950s and at that time the Budawang Range, the watershed between the Clyde and Shoalhaven Rivers, has been little visited by bushwalkers. The CMW along with other clubs of the day were doing exploratory walks. There were no full scale contour maps then. Sketch maps by early walkers in the area, Graeme Mitchell and Ken Angel, were in use. The CMW later produced such a map, "Vines Creek to the Castle" showing access from the north. Wilf, with his well known interest in exploration and maps, was keenly interested in this. Also interested, and very active in exploring the area

was Colin Watson who became a friend of Wilf.

In 1960 the CMW produced a large sketch map, "The Northern Budawang Range", based on information collected during their many walks in the area. In 1967, when the map had gone into its third edition, the Budawang Committee was formed under the auspice of Colin Watson to promote the area. Wilf was a founding member.

The Committee ultimately produced four books, three of them directly about the Clyde-Shoalhaven area. Wilf was deeply involved with all of them. By then his interest had become widespread, but it was his interest in history, geography and his association with the Geographical Names Board that was of special use to the Committee. And of course his expertise in the field.

In "Pigeon House and Beyond" (1982) he wrote Chapter 1 "Historical Background" and Chapter 2 "Walking in the Budawang Range" His knowledge was invaluable. In "Fitzroy Falls and Beyond" (1988) he contributed Chapter 3 "Aborigines to Bushwalkers".

The Committee oversaw the production of the Budawang Sketch map up to the ninth edition in 1998. During this period many names were placed in the area between Currockbilly Mountains and Sassafras. Wilf was present through all of this. Wherever possible old names were revived after consultation with local residents. Many residents were not pleased with the frivolous names, lightheartedly bestowed by early walkers to features already named. Aboriginal names were carefully researched as to their exact meaning and placed accordingly. Wilf's general knowledge and his knowledge of the workings of the Geographical Names Board were priceless here.

Wilf was chairman of the Budawang Committee in its final years until its winding up in 2006. He used his talent for public speaking many times in promoting the aims of the Committee. All of Wilf's Budawang work has been invaluable to the world of bushwalking.

George Elliott



Snippets from
others who walked
with Wilf

So long Wilf, one of our great bushmen. I think Wilf was a fan of Jimmie Rodgers, the original Blue Yodeller

Col Gibson

I went on a number of trips with Wilf particularly parts of the Great River Walk. Wilf at times could be quite outrageous, jokes corny to the level of painfulness, nevertheless he was one of the most decent men that I have met. I always felt with Wilf that there was a core integrity and actual honesty that demanded that he be cut far more slack than most men. I will remember his total disregard for the law of trespass and for a wonderful expression, "as cold as a mother superior's kiss". He was a very considerate leader who always tried to make sure that everybody in his party was okay, a strongly opinionated but generally correct navigator and a man who was a privilege to know.

Raf Byron

Wilf was often asking me to tell Warwick Daniels that he managed to do the Three Peaks on day one, i.e., reaching the Cox River after leaving Katoomba and doing the Three Peaks that day WALKING as he always emphasised. He looked askance on the speed demons that ran the bush to claim records. He was a real traditionalist, they had to walk to claim a record according to his traditions.

Bob Salijevic

Us three in the early 1960s: Wilf Hilder, Richard Plantinger and myself walked many hard trips, the Three Peaks in the Blue Mountains, Nattai River, the top end of the Shoalhaven River, jumping from rock to rock at the blockup, we would push one another to the limit. Wilf had a strong ego and it was a privilege to walk with him.

We three flew to south west Tasmania and walked from Madena to Mt. Ann. The map we had (and still have) was hand drawn, it was very rough. One day it rained all day and we made camp on the horizontal trees, hung our wet gear on a tree and the three of us huddled in a small tent to heat water in our mug with a meta tab for a cup of soup. It rained all night, it was bloody cold to put our wet gear on and keep on going but Wilf had a strong will and was a great mate to walk with. He was "Wilf the Tiger."

Tony Queitzsch



The late Bill Capon compiled a history of significant walks that SBW has run since its inception

Here is his short note about Wilf's tremendous contribution.

Wilf led many tough trips from 1961 to mid 70s – including Mittagong to Katoomba, the Three Peaks with a focus on the Kanangra, Colo, Ettrema and Western Wollemi.

He was a member of the Budawang Committee and helped to produce three books, including the Sturgiss book.

From about 1990 he made a huge contribution to club walking with the great South, West and North series of walks and also shared the task of opening up the Great River Walk route.

In the early 60s he erected a 1.5 metre stone cairn on a ridge above the Capertee in memory of the legendary Gordon Smith. However he left unresolved his quest for the route the Cattle Duffers used to take cattle from the Glen Alice.

Bill Capon



Wilf (left) with Colin Watson (right) on CMW trip in 1976 on the "White Hands Cave" expedition, Quilty's Mountain.



Wilf was prominent in the Nordic Ski Club being both a founder and president. Here are reflections from NSC members

Here are reflections from NSC members Wanderings with Wilf – a Skiing, Hiking and Bushwalking Tour down Memory Lane by Paul Jennings and James Cryer, March 2010.

Homage to a bushwalker/skier – In the great pantheon of bushwalkers and cross-country skiers, we still hear the footsteps of the giants such as Paddy Pallin but not far behind, are some of the other greats of the bushwalking “hall of fame” – whose footsteps still reverberate around the canyons of the mind.

And up there, leading the pack would be Wilf Hilder – indestructible, indomitable, contrarian – but never boring. Someone who epitomizes the spirit of adventure – feisty, fearless and forthright. Someone who challenges the status quo, the orthodox and conventional wisdom.

Such strong-willed characters can draw friendly-fire. Their views can polarize and divide. But one thing must be said: any pronouncement that Wilf Hilder made was thoroughly researched, checked and validated.

Ask him about Barrallier’s expedition across the Blue Mountains in 1802 and you would get a detailed analysis backed up by academic and practical research. Ask him about the origins of the iconic “Three Peaks” walk in the Blue Mountains ... or the correct pronunciation of “Jagungal” ... or who built which Snowy Mountains huts and when – and Wilf will give you chapter-and-verse, backed up, not only by extensive research, but by first-hand personal experience.

“The best years of my life in those mountains” by Paul Jennings

In March 2010 James Cryer, the club’s archivist and historian, and I interviewed Wilf Hilder with a view to finding out more about our club’s early years. After a long struggle with cancer, Wilf died last month. He had been a founding member and the club’s second president. What

follows here is an account of some of his recollections and some impressions of our own regarding Wilf.

At the end of 1975 the club was formed and according to Wilf, had fifteen members in that year. The largest grouping within that first membership were Catholic Bushwalkers such as Peter Harrington, the club’s first president, long time newsletter editor and later Life Member, Laurie Bell, one time president and significant contributor to the trips programme, Wilf himself, and others. He also recalled Robert Owen, who came from Scouting, Don Richardson, who had an interest in the developing resort at Perisher, Gerry Armstrong, whose wife helped considerably with the newsletter, and Dave Biggs who had a cross country skiing shop and was later made a Life Member.

Those years, and shortly after, were the heyday of cross country skiing. Most of those people were already highly skilled and capable of looking after themselves out of doors, but many things to do with actually coping with snow in Australian conditions were being more or less



discovered anew. Most of the conventional wisdoms and ski touring practices of today come from that era, some of course in slightly modified form. The only map which existed was the 1:100,000 Kosciusko map and some aerial photos. What areas were actually skiable and how they could be accessed had to be discovered by these people.

Wilf became interested in the northern part of the park, and over many years developed a sketch map of the area between Selwyn and Tabletop, and centering around Four Mile hut, for which our club became the caretaker group. This map is full of detailed information and is as much a map of Wilf as anything else. He often recalled the dangers of navigating in magnetic areas such as this and would cite an incident at a point south of Four Mile where he watched his compass swing around 180 degrees in two or three metres. This map he was able to use for a celebrated K. to K. (Kiandra to Kosciusko) with Paddy Pallin, another Life Member, in 1977. The eastward lean of Four Mile hut, due to its rotting corner stumps, only developed around the beginning of the 80s, and he remembered it being perfectly upright in the 70s. The huts were generally the foci of those early trips, sometimes staying out for up to seven days at a time and using a particular hut as a base.

A lot of club trips were spent looking for old huts and ruins. In the time before the destruction of Mould's Hut, he recalled watching corroboree frogs and doing some work there with some NSC people and some Sydney Bushwalkers. This latter club became his major affiliation in later years. He also recalled skiing from Munyang to Jagungal and back in a day. It was while talking about actual trips during our interview, that he paused and said to James and myself that ...they were "the best years of my life in those mountains".

Many trips were worked around a full moon, choosing a weekend just before. This aided driving and made it easier to see animals. The drive down was a major affair. With quarter windows open, the relief driver in the front seat and a third person sleeping in the back. Friday night sleeping was at places like the stacked concrete pipes or ladies' toilets at Munyang power station, or under the road bridge at Berridale or at Mt. Gladstone at Cooma.

Wilf had input into the historical sections of a number of very useful instructional books on how to ski cross country in Australia which were published in those early years. These included Ian Hampel's "An Introduction to Ski Touring", and a publication with the same title put out by the NSW Ski Association which was illustrated by Peter Harrington's witty drawings of a bewildered, but generally cheerful, egg-like figure in various poses skiing in the snow. The somewhat downhearted figure headed the chapter on Equipment.



Wilf served for several more years on our committee, as Vice President, Secretary and general committee member. His membership lapsed for some time after that and a period followed in which he did not ski again. He came to the 25th anniversary dinner which the club held in the year 2000, and renewed his membership for some years after that, but could not ski due, by this stage, largely to knee injuries. He became a key figure in the NSW Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs, being its president up till a few years ago. He was also president of the Australia wide umbrella organization at one time. At the interview our aim was to glean as many snippets pertaining to the club's history as possible, and our focus was not so much on Wilf himself. We were conscious however that we were in the presence of a formidable figure, and an observant, alert and inquiring mind which had a keen interest in many things, but particularly the human dimension of Australian landscapes.



With a swag in the Blue Mountains – early 1990s (Jan Roberts).





Wilf amused by a joke in typical bushwalking regalia with a "Great River Walk" shirt on. The Great River Walk is a long distance walk that Wilf helped to develop. The hat has both SBW and Warragamba Walking Club badges. (Raf Byron 2001).

At his funeral it was a little surprising to see so many people from other compartments of his very full life that we were only faintly aware of. A rare gathering of the tribes, as James described it. Freemasonry was a big part of his life which was almost unknown to those who knew him from bushwalking and skiing, and vice versa. His Masonic colleagues performed some of their rites and their presence was a very moving part of the funeral. We also learnt of some of his many other involvements, for example the Railways Historical Society and The Bluegrass Society. Indeed Ian Rannard (SBW) and his friend Jim Smith, who have been given the monumental task by the family of going through Wilf's double garage size store of magazines and papers, had come across "thousands" of Bakelite bluegrass records. The funeral started as the coffin was carried in, with banjo and guitar plucking away and a voice (Slim Dusty?) singing "Walk a Country Mile". This was a fabulous start to the ceremony. The funeral was attended by club members Steve Poole, Alan Oakey, James Cryer, Ian Griffith, Ian Wolfe and myself. Ian Wolfe gave a superb eulogy, replete with Wilf vignettes and alluding to the complex and feisty character of the man himself. Ian Griffith presented a card to the family on behalf of the club.



Something of a virtuous circle from the point of view of our tiny club has now been completed. At the same time that Wilf has perhaps gone to meet the great architect of the universe, our club has been readmitted to the Confederation. After a period of isolation we are now back in the main stream. We have the work of a few people to thank for this, but that is another story. On the executive of that organization, up till the time of his death, Wilf was a critical supporter of this move. Another promise, made to James and myself at the interview, was to chase up early NSC material in the Mitchell library. This he did over several days and the club will be the recipient of the fruits of this research when Ian and Jim shortly finish their work.

Here are some
skiing facts about
Wilf

Wilf started skiing in 1968 and won the Paddy Pallin Rogain.

Wilf explored the area around Kiandra.

In 1977 Wilf skied with Paddy Pallin to Tin Hut from Brookes Hut – when they got there it was “chockers” – so they slept on the floor.

Built and stayed overnight in an igloo near Schlink Hilton – perfect retreat gale outside, not a breeze inside.

Built a bivouac at Happy Jacks out of compacted “snowballs”, throwing the tent over the top.

Mid 80s – hiked from Mawsons to Munyang in one day.

Wilf climbed/skied Jagungal 19 times (!)

List of NSC Inaugural Members (1975)

- **Armstrong, G**
- **Cross, D & L**
- **Farquhar, J**
- **Hansen, A**
- **Harrington, P**
- **Hilder, W**
- **McAlpin, C & E**
- **Pearce, B & F**

Wilf was a member of the founding group in 1975, joined the Committee in 1976, was President for two terms (77/78 and 78/79), Vice-President in 1979/80 and Secretary in 1980/81.

Wilf Hilder

James Cryer and Paul Jennings





Office bound doing club administration work (Anon).

Here is another
comment relating
to skiing

In the middle 70s, I was fortunate enough to travel with Wilf to the ski touring areas up behind Eucumbene Dam. Wilf was always keen to introduce people to new areas in person, but made a point of making me promise that I would not tell others about the delights of the skiing around Brooks Hut! Even though my skis balled up thickly with the new fresh snow that we encountered (after some poor wax choices on my part) and I was rather too slow to keep up with him, he was patient and encouraging. Wilf seemed to relish the pristine conditions and was always keen to point out peaks, trails and huts.

George Catchpoole



One of the enduring themes associated with Wilf was his love for walking in the restricted lands of Sydney's water catchments. It was Wilf's personal kingdom and it was easy to see why. It contained vast tracks of pristine, spectacular country just made for exploration by an intrepid bushwalker. The Water Board Rangers (now the Sydney Catchment Authority) didn't see it that way and the story goes that Wilf, as a serial offender was liable for fines of astronomical proportions. It is said that they remain unpaid although it is hard to ascertain the accuracy of these accounts.

Sooner or later on Wilf's walks his group would hear about at least one of his exploits with the rangers. Their job was to keep out bushwalkers from the "special areas" surrounding the dammed lakes that were Sydney's drinking water. This policy made sense as the object was to preserve the integrity of the water. These dams exist in areas of spectacular beauty, especially Warragamba dam and the lake it created, Lake Burragorang.

Wilf loved these areas and his characteristic disregard for authority, as the quintessential Australian larrikin, was most evident in his run ins with the Water Board. His notoriety with rangers was legendary but as he knew the country better than anyone else, especially the rangers, he could slip by their scouting parties.

Here is a recollection of one of his ranger "meetings" on the track.

On one of his walks I was privileged to see the master at work. We were walking the Illawarra escarpment not far from summit tank on the railway line. Here all ground west of the main coastal ridge was in the Avon/Cordeau catchment and designated "Schedule 1" lands prohibited for entry by unauthorised people. Bushwalkers almost by definition were unauthorised.

We were happily walking along the ridge fire trail well inside Schedule 1 when our party suddenly met a ranger's vehicle going the other way. We held our collective breath as Wilf immediately engaged with the concerned ranger. Yes, we knew where we were. No, we were not lost. Yes, we understood the seriousness of being inside the catchment and yes, because of that we were definitely heading for the next exit track down the escarpment, an obscure route known to Wilf but not to the ranger. Yes, we understood the need to keep off Schedule 1 lands and yes, our plan was to exit asap.

Wilf spiced up his delivery with the odd joke possibly designed to ease the tension felt by the ranger and also to impart an impression of our leader's professional approach. In the end I could see by the ranger's body language he was convinced we were a responsible group. They shook hands with the ranger offering Wilf a rough sketch map of the area if it helped him in finding the mythical exit track. The ranger drove off. Wilf beamed. We all hailed the master at his craft. That night we enjoyed a wonderful camp site on a small lake and near the old Unanderra to Moss Vale railway line. The site was fresh and undisturbed, the way Wilf liked it. Most Schedule 1 land is like that.



Footnote: Wilf's catchment transgressions never implied a lack of respect for the integrity of the pristine nature of the catchment. He was always meticulous in ensuring zero impact walking and camping in these areas, quite probably in equal measure or better than the rangers who chased him.

Roger Treagus

And here is the dedication to the 2012 book 'The Track Maker – The Life and Works of Peter Mulheran' by Jim Smith (now out of print)

It described some of Wilf's activities in and near the restricted lands.

Some of Wilf's earliest bushwalks were in the Cedar Road country around the Kowmung River. It was while climbing around the rugged gorges of Ti Willa and Gingra Creeks in the early 1960s that he developed an enduring admiration for the man who had made the timber-getting roads through such difficult terrain. Wilf and I walked parts of the Cedar Road network together and twice stayed overnight at

the old timbermen's camp.

We carried our swags together along the Scotts Main Range section of the Cedar Road four times between 1989 and 2006.

In the latter year, during the long drought, he walked on Mulheran's Road from McMahon's Point down to the much receded edge of Lake Burragorang, enjoying a long stretch of the road that had not been exposed for half a century. The stonework and culverts along the Cedar Road, McMahon's Point Road and O'Sullivan's Road were objects of great admiration for Wilf.

He helped me to clear the overgrown vegetation and fallen branches from Mulheran's wonderful old 'high' Shortcut and Kings Tableland cliff edge trails at Wentworth Falls, shamefully neglected by the NPWS authorities. In the last year of his life, while very weak from cancer treatments, he cleared back the encroaching shrubs from the stonework around Mulheran's well on the Princes Rock track.

When I talked to Wilf about this book, he became quite emotional about the previous lack of recognition of Mulheran's remarkable skills and the official neglect of his extraordinary creations. The draft of this book was one of the last things he read. I am sorry he is not here to read the final product. Wilf Hilder was one of the most stimulating and considerate bush walking companions anyone could have had. Nearly every day I go out to Mulheran's lookout and look out over the country of the southern Blue Mountains where we walked together.

Jim Smith





Wilf in his natural habitat (Raf Byron 2002).

Wilf pioneered so many routes through the bush that it is impossible to account for them all. He was meticulous in his preparation for these epic treks and was a 20th century equivalent of the early 19th century explorers often in far more difficult country. Here is an example of his preparation for his epic 1962 journey down the Kowmung.



Wilf riding the rapids, Kowmung River, 1962.



PROPOSED KOWMUNG TRIP XMAS 1962			
APPROX ITINERARY			
TOURIST MAP! BLUE MTNS & B'GORANG VALLEY			CAMP
SAT 22	Gingkin to Tuglow Falls	Easy 4 hrs	Tuglow Falls
SUN 23	Tuglow Falls to Tuglow Hole	Med 5 hrs	Tuglow Hole
MON 24 XMAS EVE	Tuglow Hole to "O" in 'Morong Deep' (just past Morong Falls)	Rough 6 hrs	"O"
TUES 25 XMAS DAY	REST DAY	O	"O"
WED 26 BOX DAY	"O" to "P" in 'Morong Deep'	Med 4 hrs	"P"
THUR 27	"P" to Cascade Camp via 20' rope down, then 'tree'	Rough 6 hrs	Cascade Camp
FRI 28	REST ALL MORNING Cascade Camp to Werong Camp (Afternoon) (Misery Ridge)	Easy 3 hrs	Werong Camp
SAT 29	Werong Camp to "t" in Rudder's Rift (Grass camp)	Med 7½ hrs	Grass camp
SUN 30	Grass camp to Redline	Easy 3 hrs	Redline
MON 31 NEW YEAR EVE	Redline Camp to Cache Bend	Med 6 hrs	Cache Bend
TUES 1 NEW YEAR DAY	Cache Bend to Kanangra Rd via Boyd Range Rover Trail - cab Blackheath - Sydney	Climb+ Track 6 hrs	

The letters for example "O" in the above table refer to those on the 1930s Blue Mountains Burragarang Tourist map as no coordinates were available.

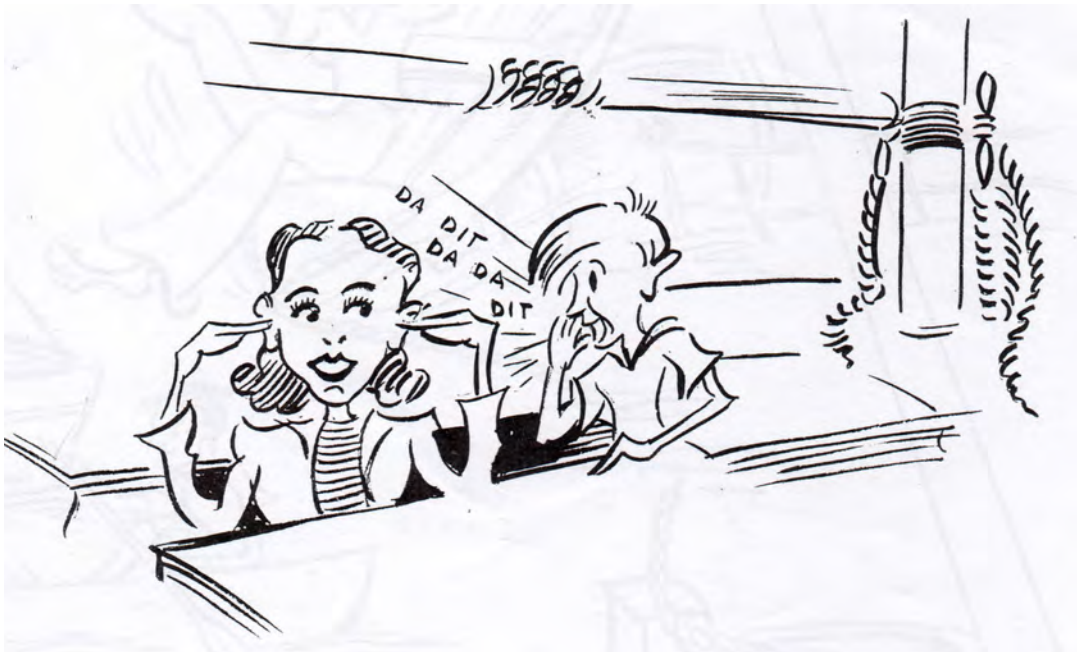


	KOWMUNG TRIP (CLOTHING & GEAR)	DISCUSS
1 SET	Ordinary outer clothes worn only in train to + from	
1	Small bag in which train clothes are left with taxi driver	
1 pr	Shoes, basket-ball type or similar. good tread grip worn while swimming - get size larger for water. shrink	
1 pr	camp slippers thin light 'ballet-type' (see Denise Hull)	
	socks 2 pair thick 1 pair thin	
	underwear (lightest weight) 1 on, 1 off	
1 pr	slacks - very thin cotton. lightest weight for sleeping and	
1 pr	shorts (no spare)	[insect protection]
1	swimming wear. lightweight non-chafing - worn wet	
1	"Kowmung shirt" lightweight	[all the trip (see D Hull)]
1	Blouse (thin and light)	
1	Shirt, long-sleeve, long length, thinnest lightest woven	[pure wool]
1	Plastic half-length Fisherman's Jacket (Mick Simmonds £1)	
1	Hat, broad brim, protect eyes + neck - fit chin strap(?)	
1	set personal toilet needs - only what is actually certain to be used (see DH). Small waterproof plaster, small slice soap (not full cake) small washing soap or Rinso small sun cream, small personal towel - WETTEX or baby napkin, DMT Repellent? plastic bot metho (small) for feet, cosmetic cream (small) for hands + face, as req'd. needle, cotton, darning wool	
1	Flyveil	
1	Inflatable rubber cushions (as Li-lo or swimming aid?)	
1	Waterproof plastic inner-bag	
1	Ration bag for clothing, sundry plastic bags + rubber bands	
1	length cord for towing pack	
3	long strong leather bootlaces.	
1	good large groundsheet (plasticised fabric,	
1	3½ PINT BILLY with LID	[no holes]
	PLATE, MUG, KFS, MATCHES (IN PLASTIC) COMB, TOOTH BRUSH	
	HANDK, SLEEPBAG, WATER BKT, TP, COMB, VERY SMALL TORCH	
	Where needed, keep items separately in various sized plastic bags for waterproofing	





Wilf in the Shoalhaven country 28 January 1961.



Wilf was always a great talker. This drawing was done on a boat trip when he was eight years old.



PART TWO – Walking with Wilf

Walking with Wilf was both educational and entertaining. His vast knowledge of the bush informed us and the inevitable “situations” that always seemed to occur entertained us. Here is a sample of some of the things that happened on particular Wilf walks. It probably represents the tip of the iceberg as one can imagine the huge number of “incidents” that have gone unrecorded drawn from more than half a century of walking.

Wilf and the No
Pants, No Shoes
Walk

In the 1990s Wilf led a number of serial walks that I joined. One was the whole Great North Walk. On my second ever walk with SBW I had arranged to meet Wilf’s party near Flat Rock Lookout above the Congewai Valley on their second day out as I had only the time to walk the Sunday of their two day walk. This section of the Great North Walk skirted the southern escarpment of the Hunter Valley. I arrived at the appointed time on the Sunday morning and waited for Wilf’s party to appear down the Wattagan Forest fire trail. I soon heard voices and then the party appeared with Wilf at the front in more ways than one as he was sans pants, sporting just his white undies and Y fronts but looking a little more modest with his shirt and hat on.

Wilf greeting me beaming widely but left any explanation of his attire to members of his party. “I suppose you will want to know what happened? Well, we had this car shuffle and in the confusion Wilf’s pants went in the car that is now at the end of the walk”.

“So you’ll be OK at the end then Wilf?” I said.

“It doesn’t worry me if it doesn’t worry anyone else”, Wilf said. “Anyway its easier to check for leeches”. It seemed to me that the party had been entertained continuously by their leader since their Saturday morning start and were a little tired from too much laughter.

We had been walking for a while enjoying the views over the Congewoi valley when we passed several bushwalkers going the other way. They gave Wilf a stare but Wilf, ever the gentleman, simply tipped his hat and said good morning. It almost seemed as if walking in this fashion was completely normal. We arrived at our lunch spot on a sunny ridge above the valley and it was then that Wilf’s shoes gave out with the sole parting company with the uppers on one shoe. Wilf now had a crisis far greater in magnitude than the lack of pants. It so happened that I was carrying in my day pack an old pair of joggers. As this was my second only SBW walk I was a little over prepared with gear with two pairs of shoes. Wilf took off his shoes and banged them on a rock in disgust. I took out my spares and compared them with his discards. By some miracle the size and shape were identical.

“Hey Wilf, put these on and see if they fit”, I said.



"You don't have to give up your shoes for me. I can bandage up my shoes to keep the soles on". But Wilf's expression was one of gratitude.

"No, these are spares, Wilf".

"You carry spares!" Wilf looked amused. "OK, I'll try them".

He put them on and, do you know, they fitted perfectly. Wilf looked mightily pleased as he executed a few trial strides around the lookout. So for the rest of the day Wilf wore my shoes but still sans pants of course. The day would have been complete had I packed spare pants as well, as again our waist measurements were not that far out.

That was a walk I will never forget and not for the scenery.

A few days later I received in the mail a pair of slightly used shoes plus a complete collection of Great North Walk maps with a big "thank you" on a piece of paper attached to the shoes. My only regret now is that I have no photo of that ridge top meeting with Wilf, with group in tow, striding towards me in all his regalia. That showed up two of Wilf's great characteristics, his larrikin's view of convention and his generosity and gratitude for random acts of kindness.

Roger Treagus

Wilf and the Army
Camp

Wilf was well known for the huge amount of money he had "potentially" amassed in Water Board fines and one time we telephoned him for advice on walking a certain section of the Wild Dogs in the Blue

Mountains. Wilf gave us two descriptions of the best route to take - the strictly legal one and the more interesting one. He also told us when the Water Board personnel were likely to patrol in their vehicle and helicopter. Heaven knows which of his contacts kept him informed on Water Board movements.

My favourite memory is of booking onto a walk he was leading from East Hills Station (close to home) and finishing at Campbelltown. I was keen to learn some new local walking tracks and duly followed Wilf, along with about a dozen other keen Sunday walkers, into bushland on the southern side of Heathcote Road. Most people know that this land belongs to the Army and entry is prohibited. Wilf did not seem to acknowledge this. At one stage we were surrounded by very unusual hazards and when I remarked that this seemed to be some sort of obstacle course, Wilf quite nonchalantly informed us that it was the Army Commando Course. Having passed that test we next found ourselves advancing towards the Sunday morning parade & a very important looking Officer, who was not amused with our party's appearance and bailed up Wilf. We were marched out the other end by the officer just as Wilf intended and continued to enjoy a sunny day, also visiting The Masonic Homes and gardens on our way to the bushland surrounding the Georges River.

Maureen Carter





On the track with Debbie Shapira on Ramshead, 1995 (Ian Rannard).

Wilf and the
Recalcitrant Train

I did a trip with Wilf one October back in the 1990s that involved Bell Railway station to Wollongambe Crater (Saturday night camp), upstream to Wollongambe camp cave (which I'd never seen on previous trips to the area and having waded within ten metres of it!), wading upstream from the cave to locate a pass up I'd previously found onto Shay Ridge, walking along Shay Ridge firetrail for about 4.5km, dropping SW to some magnificent pagodas for lunch and inspecting a creek tunnel nearby before heading over to Gooch's Crater for more exploration. The weather was pleasant, if a tad warm, and it was a great trip in good company. Wilf told me on the phone that the main objective of the trip was to observe what should be an abundance of Waratahs in bloom; I don't recall seeing one.

After lunch on Sunday at the pagodas, and checking out Gooch's Crater, we took a firetrail to take one or two steps across the upper Wollongambe River. I still vividly remember the colour of the water: translucent black! I'd drunk copious amounts of this water, pollution not in evidence, further downstream on canyoning trips over the previous twenty-or-so years. Yuck!!!

We headed south along a vague, overgrown scrubby, disused road to skirt around the edge of Clarence colliery and made our way over to Newnes Junction railway platform. I commented to our esteemed leader, "Are you sure the trains stop here Wilf?" as I couldn't recall them stopping on my previous train trips to Lithgow.

Wilf Hilder



He assured me with his usual humorous banter that the trains had never failed to stop on previous occasions and provide their “well established, impeccable service in the fine tradition of the NSW Railways” etc. Wilf stated that we just had to make sure we waved the train down as it rounded the big bend at the head of Dargan’s Creek. From memory (which isn’t always reliable) this conversation took place at around 3.30pm, half an hour before the train was due to arrive.

“Here comes the train!” We waved and waved and waved, and-- there goes the bloody train!

“Oh woe, woe and thrice woe!” and similar expletives were heard to echo around the one-horse villa of Newnes Junction (the horse had long since bolted many years ago).

‘Never-fail-Hilder’ went very red in the face and we collectively heaped scorn on his age-ed head (not really; just a few sarcastic jibes; after all it is WILF we’re talking about here!).

“His Honor” responded with something like, “Gee I can’t understand it. I’m at a loss for words (that’ll be the day!) It’s never failed to stop in the past, etc.”

I looked up the timetable and commented that we’d better get going as we had a 6km slog along Sandham Road before the next train was due to arrive at Bell station.

As we descended from Newnes platform onto the dirt road there was a local gentleman attending to his roses and we informed him of our predicament. He responded with “the trains used to stop here until six weeks ago when the loco drivers took industrial action on safety grounds”.

“You are officially exonerated Wilfred”, I declared to an unusually quiet Mr Hilder.

We arrived at Bell station with time to spare and as far as I know (I disembarked at Blackheath) the train trip home was uneventful.

A bushwalk with Wilf was never a dull affair, that’s for sure!

Allan Wells

Wilf Likened to a
Greek God

Some years ago Pearl Gillott led an odyssey up the entire NSW coast from Sydney to the Queensland border - I think it took four years or more, as Pearl was determined to cover every km of the distance. It was all public transport with help from school buses or taxis for the really isolated bits.

For one of the many trips involved in this endeavor, we used the caravan park at Minnie Waters for our base, radiating north and south. We took a school bus to Wooli and Pearl charmed a local fisherman into ferrying our group across the river, so that we could hike to Stockyard, to link up with Pearl's previous trip, and return to the rickety little wharf by 3pm, where the fisherman would pick us up again. We slogged along a timber trail all morning, but it became



clear that we would not make Stockyard in time, so Wilf Hilder, fleet of foot, volunteered to go ahead alone and make sure that Pearl's goal would be reached.

The rest of us headed for the coast and returned north along the beaches and rock platforms with about twenty minutes to wait for our boatman. No sign of Wilf, and we became very anxious in such an isolated area, but with just one minute to spare, Wilf appeared triumphant – and I mean triumphant. He appeared, racing along, with an Olympic Torch held aloft as he ran. The torch may not have been an original from The Games, but it really was a decent facsimile. Our champion had made it to Stockyard and picked up his trophy on the way. To our hugely relieved group, he looked like a Greek God.

Pam Organ



On a Northern Beaches walk carting rubbish from a lookout (Jan Roberts).



At the 80th Coolana Reunion Oct 2007 (Jan Roberts).

Wilf Hilder



Wilf and the art of
track finding

I first walked with Wilf in the early eighties on a leg of Bruce's Walk, along with Jim Smith and other participants but didn't really get to meet either of them as it was such a large group.

In 1988 I was on the Fairy Bower track at Mt Victoria searching for a "man-made" dam wall that would lead me to the old chert incline railway, according to Jim Smith's guidebook "How to See the Blue Mountains" (1st edition). I had my twelve year old daughter Miriam with me at the time and was sitting down on the track absolutely 'stumped' as the man-made wall we crossed took us absolutely nowhere-just a steep talus slope covered with thick scrub. While musing over my predicament with guidebook in hand two blokes approached us walking up the track with a bush saw and other small hand tools. The taller, more senior gentleman said hello and inquired as to where I intended walking. I told him where I had been and that there must be a mistake in the guidebook because the 'man-made' wall back up the track led nowhere. The almost immediate response of the younger man was "Oh yeah, I forgot about that wall!".

The older fellow said, "You'd better sign that guidebook for him Jim" and then proceeded to introduce themselves as Jim Smith and Wilf Hilder. I asked both of them to sign the book as I knew they were both bushwalkers of some repute.

Wilf then offered to take both Miriam and I down to the 'correct' wall and up the other side of the creek to the incline railway, filling us in on its history along the way. I came away with the impression that here was a very friendly man, keen to share his love of history and bush lore and graced with a keen sense of humour. That impression of Wilf still lingers with me today.

We didn't meet again until the early to mid nineties on an Ian Rannard SBW Easter or Christmas/New Year trip (memory fails me) and of course a number of subsequent trips over the years. I have lots of fond memories of his yarns, humour, quaint sayings and his yodelling (usually whilst ascending a stiff climb while the rest of us were struggling for breath!).

On the subject of Bushwalking he was a walking encyclopaedia.

On one particular Easter trip, led by Ian Rannard, we were on the Hume and Hovell track and preparing to participate in "Happy Hour" when the heavens opened up and everyone, except Wilf and I, abandoned food and fire and fled to their shelters. Wilf and I proceeded to consume said Happy Hour while Wilf joked and taunted the tent dwellers. We both ended up 'as full as googs' and neither bothered cooking tea that night.

On another Ian Rannard trip we were trying to find a spur down onto the Shoalhaven River. Wilf had assured us that a particular spur had a track 'as wide as a freeway' and we'd get down without a problem. After some time of traversing this spur, clinging on like mountain goats, our progress was halted by a waterfall in a side gully and we ended up spending the night in the gully with small rocks falling around us, except for a few members of the party who managed to find an old copper mine adit to sleep in. The next day Wilf copped a friendly ribbing about his



'freeway' but on a later trip Annie Maguire and Frank Grennan found Wilf's 'freeway' just as he'd described it!

Allan Wells



Wilf on track, clearing Lindeman's Pass in 1983 (Jim Smith).

Wilf Hilder



Wilf and the Nudist Camp

One of the earlier stages of the Great River Walk took us through the upper Wollondilly gorge on a two day walk. It was through country rarely walked by bushwalkers, starting a little upstream of Tugalong Station and finishing at Goodmans Ford. What made this particular stage really interesting was the planned camp on the Saturday night on a very scenic bend in the river. We had about twelve people in the party including Wilf who was thoroughly enjoying walking in this new country. What Wilf didn't know was the nature of the camp site. About 3pm we were approaching it and I was keen to see Wilf's reaction when he realised what it was. We were walking across a broad paddock near the camp when a sign appeared ahead. It was a poster on the access trail coming in from the ridges above us welcoming visitors to River Island Naturist Camp.

It was mid winter and the place was deserted except for a fully clothed proprietor. I had booked the cabins for the party as well as making reservations at the "restaurant" (for want of a better description). Having scant regard for the evening's mid winter chill Wilf caste aside his clothes with lightning speed and spent the next hour or so floating in the warm riverside spa. He loved it. Many in the party joined him after dinner amongst the bubbles of the spa. The place was a living cliché. Posters all around the camp advertised the activities, nude volleyball competitions, nude cricket, nude darts, nude soccer, nude tennis.

The whole two day walk was never better than that time in the spa seeing the joy on Wilf's face for discovering such a gem as this. Its uncoventionality matched his own.

Roger Treagus



Nude swim, Hume & Hovell Track 1994
(Ian Rannard).



Wilf and the
Circumnavigation
of Sydney Harbour

8.30 a.m.: Macquarie Park, City of Sydney

Having all caught crowded trains and buses to (Semi) Circular Quay Station, we stand in our SBW circle introducing ourselves. Eight or so middle-aged citizens in sturdy walking shoes, sensible shorts, shirts and hats, with backpacks, right in the middle of the thoroughfare; smart suits, leather shoes and briefcases sidestepping us to rush on to their various work places.

Formality completed, Wilf draws our attention to the clock at the top of the elegant building over the road, and we turn our collective gaze skyward . . . causing the pedestrian equivalent of a motorway pile- up as several of our professionally-dressed companions also stop to peer upwards.

With grey clouds looming low, we set off at a brisk pace to begin the umpteenth leg of Wilf's (Semi) Circular Quay Extravaganza.

9.30 a.m.: Botanical Gardens

The first raindrops fall during lively debate over the distinguishing characteristics of Moreton Bay Figs as opposed to Port Jackson Figs, and the importance of taking into account individual differences when trying to identify specimens.

Hurrying over the damp grass to shelter in the loos, we are mortified to be chased by the young gardener who has just seeded and watered the green slope which we'd taken to be the public path.

10.30 a.m.: Woolloomooloo

The sun has come out in time for us to admire the renovated wharves and begin the plod up to Potts Point. Wilf keeps us entertained with tall tales and true of serving the public in government offices, the day job he suffered for decades so he could spend his weekends and holidays bushwalking.

11.30 a.m.: somewhere in Darling Point.

We find ourselves directionally challenged, but not for long.

"I've found it! This way!" calls our intrepid leader, and we all obediently follow him into a lush green area of well-kept rainforest and beautiful flowers, separated by neat paving. As we stroll along the path and admire the healthy plants, I wonder at this lovely waterside park, and ask Wilf its name.

"I don't know the exact address", he says cheerfully as he reaches the gate, opens it, and shepherds us out of the exclusive private garden into the street. "But it was a great short cut! I'll have to remember it for next time!"



12.30 p.m.: somewhere near Double Bay

We reach our designated lunch spot, a waterside park somewhere in the most exclusive area of the eastern suburbs. The heavens open once more. We rush toward a rotunda for shelter. The local tramp sees us coming and hastily de-camps. We munch our sandwiches, as he wanders beneath shop awnings, doubtless muttering about “tourists” and “land rights”. We wave to him, inviting him back into his abode, but he pays us no heed.

2.30 p.m.: Ferry Wharf, Rose Bay

By now the sun has come out with a vengeance, and soaking gear begins to dry. Eight bedraggled walkers of a certain age sit on the jetty enjoying ice creams. By three o'clock a crowd of small boys in Cranbrook uniforms has joined us. We all climb aboard a sleek, shiny hydrofoil which races over the blue waters of the harbour to deliver old(er) and young safely back to (Semi) Circular Quay.

I did this walk at least seven years ago, probably more, however its wacky eccentricity remains etched in my memory as a typically surprising and hilarious day on a walk led by Wilf Hilder.

Susi Prescott



A young Wilf assisting a young lady on Pegasus Pass (Tony Queitzsch).



Wilf and his Great Knowledge of country

Walking with Wilf was walking with the best collection of maps you could imagine but they were all in Wilf's head. They included mountain passes, tracks, negotiable routes and creeks that no other map ever recorded, only Wilf's brain held this unique collection. It included the Blue Mountains, Kur-ring-gai Chase, Marra Marra, the Snowys, and all the National Parks up and down the NSW coast and adjacent mountains plus many inland areas such as the Warrumbungles and the Nandewars.

On top of this was Wilf's encyclopaedic knowledge of the routes of the early explorers, especially the lesser well known ones such as Ensign Barrallier. Wilf had read the explorers' journals and had used his great knowledge of country to interpret the explorer's location from his journal description. This produced many fascinating insights into what the explorers actually achieved, great material for lunch or campfire discussion.

Wilf's knowledge of tracks and routes meant that you could walk with him into seemingly difficult or even impenetrable jungle and magically the vegetation would part, a little like Moses and the Red Sea, and a track or way through would appear ahead.

Applying these qualities of Wilf, a number of incidents come to mind.

We were walking down the Wollondilly on a Great River Walk stage and had in the party both the Shire President and the Shire Chief Engineer for the old Mulwaree local government area. After an easy crossing of the river near Guineacor Creek, Wilf made a sudden departure off the riverside route and ascended Ben's Island, a piece of elevated land almost surrounded by a big meander in the river. On top, Wilf turned to the Shire President and said with a sweep of his arm, "this is all yours!"

The Shire President looked out at the view. "You mean even this is in the Shire?"

"Yes" proclaimed Wilf, "your boundary extends to that ridge way over there" pointing to an insignificant little bump off to the north.

"Gee" said the Shire president. "How about that. I never knew it was so big and went so far north. Gee!" he repeated.

Another time we were walking in the Canyonleigh Gorge and came across a tiny stream barely a metre wide. A short distance upstream the stream bent to the left.

"Now that's woeful" Wilf pointed out. "The current Canyonleigh sheet has that creek bending the opposite way". Wilf took out his 1:25000 topo and showed us. "No proper field research. They don't bother these days". This revelation brought on a major complaint Wilf had that was repeated often. "They have even dropped the cadastral on the current series so no property boundaries, no easements, just pretty photos". And you know something, he was dead right on all counts.



Another wonderful incident comes to mind. Our small party of four were walking to Yerranderie and were on day two as we approached the old town. As we got close Wilf quickened the pace without explanation. On arrival he made for a door in one of the preserved buildings and knocked. Val Lhuede opened the door, the owner and rescuer of this wonderful heritage site.

“Wilf! It’s you!” she said in a surprised tone.

“Hello Val, I am reporting for the meeting of the Yerranderie Historical association. I think it starts in five minutes. I considered an apology but came myself”.

The rest of us were flabbergasted. Out here in the near wilderness, deep in the bush and without warning, Wilf is on time for a meeting. Wilf just loved meetings.

Val was a legend in her own right. Val came across Yerranderie when it was almost lost with severe neglect everywhere and over a very long period using all her resources was able to rebuild the town to its (almost) former glory. The main explorer who was the first European into these parts was one Ensign Barrallier. He was an enigma being a French national in a British army about the time Napoleon was around. As an explorer he was very successful because he listened to the Aborigines but his achievements were not properly recognised as he was on the outer with the establishment. Val was an expert on Barrallier but so was Wilf. After the meeting of the Yerranderie Historical Society Val invited us to afternoon tea. It was one to remember because no sooner had we sat down that Val and Wilf engaged in verbal combat over where Barrallier had walked on his expeditions.

We went outside so the discussion could proceed with the geographical features in dispute in front of us.

“See that point just to the right of Colong. He made it past there”, Wilf stated.

“No Wilf, he struck difficult country there and traversed north up Christy’s Creek”, yelled out Val.

“He couldn’t penetrate Christy’s to the top because of the waterfall. No he went this way”, Wilf pointed to his map.

And so it went on and at the end both Val and Wilf were smiling. “We always do this when I am here”, Wilf grinned some more. Then I understood. It was a bit of sport. But it was sport supported by a great knowledge both of country and of Barrallier that Wilf and Val shared. Rarely have I struck elsewhere this depth of detail in conversations about our history.

When Wilf passed away he took with him irreplaceable knowledge about our country and our past. One of the last things that I understood he said on this subject was that he knew hidden passes on Narrow Neck and had promised to show someone. He never did. I wonder where they are.

Roger Treagus



Wilf and the Road to Enlightenment

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 fell more into this category than those of our own national-treasure-bushwalker, the late Wilf Hilder.

The following recollections are from two separate walks (one around the Georges River and one on the South Coast) that I did with Wilf in 2000. Through the sands of time, they merged into one in my mind. The following article was first published in "The Sydney Bushwalker" in 2000.

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.

Freedom walkers

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 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.



With swag in the 1980s.



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, he led us on to the next step in our journey into our inner lives.

The bare truth

By lunch time the sun had come out and we took a skinny dip in a beautiful rocky swimming pool 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 lower half) by the water, he threw us some 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 realized".

"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.

Judy O'Connor



Wilf as bicycle route planner – 1980.
From Freewheeling Magazine.





Wilf – always prepared for a river crossing.

Wilf Hilder



Wilf and the Road
to Enlightenment

My wife encouraged me to do an SBW walk as a visitor prior to joining back in 1991. So my first walk was up the Great North Walk near Mangrove Mountain, the leader was of course Wilf. Once I was

introduced to him on the walk I got the immediate sense he was a colourful character with his running and fascinating commentary on the local history. It was not until we arrived at the gates of a property that I appreciated just how colourful. I considered Wilf as the easement king, he knew them all, working for the Dept of Lands. This day he had identified an easement that legally he could walk along through this property and save us several kilometres. But the gate was locked and two very large and loud dogs came running at the gate to guard it. With all the commotion the property owners came down to tell us to rack off.

Wilf took umbrage with this approach and proceeded to cite easement law to them and shouted out the rights of people to walk on the easement. With that the owners started to become threatening mentioning the machine guns they had mounted on their veranda. Eventually Wilf saw that he was not going to get access this way so we backed off and walked on the recognised track.

A week later Wilf contacted us to say that he had re-examined his maps and the easement did exist. The very next walk with SBW was again with Wilf who walked for most of a day with just his underpants, as somehow his clothes had been taken away during a car swap that morning and were waiting for him at the end of the walk. It didn't deter Wilf.

Every walk I ever went on with Wilf I laughed and laughed. He was like that. He was an original and no other bushwalking club had that much entertainment on a walk. He made bushwalking live. So I joined SBW.

Roger Treagus



Wilf with TAFE students and teachers on Narrowneck 1986.



Wilf and the X
Files Walk

I thought when I found myself teetering precariously on top of a three metre high hurricane fence, one leg on either side of the curled barbed wire, that I had reached, quite literally, the summit of a Wilf Hilder walk.

The moment was indelibly etched in my mind because of, let's face it, the absurdity of the situation.

In a sort of out-of-body flash, I saw our bedraggled group as a total stranger would. Not only were we risking bodies of broken bones by trying to make those triangles of hurricane fit the toeholes of our over-sized boots, it was clear to see from the wobbly top of the fence that there was a perfectly good bitumen road a few metres along which we could have used.

This was not surprising, of course, given that we were scaling the fence of the Westmead Hospital's nursing quarters and nurses are not stupid. They don't go 'up and over' when they can go straight through. And even if they were, they have unions to protect them and tell them their rights. Unfortunately, bushwalkers don't and, even if they did, I've got a feeling Wilf would not curb his passion for finding adventure in the suburbs without a fight.

There is, of course, always a bright side. In this case, there were no guard dogs waiting on the other side, although the nurses sunning themselves on their balconies were looking pretty hostile.

More to come

So, it was with some surprise, and not inconsiderable awe, that I found Wilf surpassed himself on his recent flexiday walk from Waterfall to Otford. It completely dispelled my association of flexidays with rest, relaxation, spoiling oneself, the luxury of the day off, etc.

Six of us took off for what turned out to be an experience straight out of the 'X Files' ** (For those who don't understand it used to be a high rating show at channel 10 on Wednesday nights). It's true the walks program said something about a tunnel or two and its true I only spoke to Wilf via answer machines and its true I thought he was joking when he said "bring a torch", but I never thought we'd be doing a sort of combination 'great railways/disused tunnels of the world' tour over 22km of the south coast. Silly me, I'm sure the clues were there if I'd been clever enough to switch to 'Wilf alert' mode.

We started at Waterfall rock hopping at a fast pace along piles of gravel spaced out alongside the main railway line to Otford which got the adrenalin going, I can tell you. Not the rock hopping, but the thought of random trains hurtling past. At some point we veered off and, next thing, we were into our first tunnel.

Altogether we entered the dark, damp and chilled interior of six separate disused train tunnels, all featuring slushy mud, running streams, unexpected jugular-height coils of wire, broken bricks, glass, holes, musty air, eerie echoes and heaven knows what unseen creepy crawlies.



Walking through them was not as bad as it sounds, the worst part was getting to the far end and finding the exits were blocked up and having to turn tail and walk back into the blackness.

The best one

My favourite was the one that we approached through silent expanses of paddocks littered with rusted machinery, disused equipment and broken fences. Everything was old and run-down. A series of open sided sheds led up to the tunnel which was approached via an ancient, narrow track that once shuttled coal into the depths of the tunnel. Makeshift open drainage spilt polluted water around corners and onto uneven levels of earth, ingrained with countless layers of metal and stones.

Smells were everywhere, but there was a particular indescribable earthy odour that needed a clothes peg on the nose to avoid. As we didn't have any, we tried to stop breathing which only turned our faces bright red and intensified the smell when we inevitably had to gulp in huge mouthfuls of oxygen moments later. To this day, I don't know what it was.

There was a loud humming noise coming from some unidentifiable piece of vibrating machinery in the last shed we passed, which showed strange signs of recent habitation. Lights were on, bench spaces looked used and even a noticeboard had a few scribbled messages on it. It was as if the place had been busy with activity only minutes before.

Not a human in sight

But there was not a single sign of human presence. It was a pure ghost town, something straight out of the 'X Files'. Wilf plunged into the tunnel and we obediently followed in his footsteps. It was a long tunnel illuminated by a few sparse bare light bulbs which dotted its length until the eyes could no longer focus. Jumbo size clear plastic tubing hung from the ceiling, like a huge transparent sausage pulsating with a life of its own, as it laboriously pumped air or some sort of gas, to somewhere in the hidden, empty blackness of the tunnel.

Rickety scaffolding leaned against the walls in the distance. Obviously something was going on, some sort of operation, but what? Where were all the people? Not a single human being was anywhere to be seen. Had they all been beamed up to an overhead satellite from some foreign and hostile planet for which this celestial backblock was home? That's what happened on channel 10 anyway.

What sinister schemes and secrets were being planned and plotted by the aliens in the depths of the tunnel? Was the clear plastic tubing pumping some sort of life support breathing gas to them? We attacked the problem by doing what all bushwalkers do – we turned our anxious and bewildered faces to the leader and asked him.

With a look that clearly did not invite follow-up questions, Wilf declared they were growing mushrooms. As for the people, well, they were probably on a flexiday, he said.



We trudged on, past deserted, ugly depots full of sky-high mountains of jet black coal (we breathed a sigh of relief when Wilf didn't insist we walk over them), more railway lines, sidings, a deserted railway platform. We eventually passed a suburban house with two barking dogs protecting their swimming pool while their owners were at work (I swear Wilf was eyeing the backyard off for lunch) and then back to the station.

Coming home on the train, Wilf became wistful and confided there was, in fact, a seventh tunnel which we hadn't had time to explore.

It's always good to be left wanting more...

***** The X-Files was a top rating American science fiction television series about the paranormal world of aliens and unexplained events which ran on Australian television between 1993 to 2002.***

Judy O'Connor



Wilf at the reopening of Bruce's Walk 24 May 1986. Photo by John Falloon.





From left, Vince Connolly, Bill Worthington, Gene Scholl, Jim Weston, John Gates and Wilf at right – Catholic Bushwalking Club – note the style of daypacks in use – probably in the Lower Blue Mountains – 1959. Kiaramba Album courtesy CBC.

Wilf and the Terra del fuego Story

Going on an overnight walk with Wilf put a new dimension on any walk as it was around the campfire that all of Wilf's well tested and often repeated yarns got a new airing. Even for one familiar with Wilf's repertoire, all Wilf's stories lived again when fuelled by the warmth of the fire and especially to an audience made up of members and prospectives new to the show and his stories. Many stories were about Wilf's many escapes from the long arm of the Sydney Catchment Authority and the multiple "Wilf sightings" by rangers intent on enforcing the exclusion rule inside the Schedule 1 lands of the catchments of Sydney's dams.

Getting into the spirit of the storytelling on one camp I thought I would put in my two bob's worth and tell about the time my small cruise ship was stranded on a remote beach on the island of Terra del Fuego near Cape Horn in South America. (When they want to stop, small cruise ships



routinely beach themselves at low tide in those waters because no anchor holds due to the extensive kelp beds). I thought it was a yarn worth telling. It had the added bonus of being true.

On hearing my account Wilf immediately regarded it as apocryphal and merely a “yarn” but one suited to the tenor of the evening’s storytelling. Wilf congratulated me for my originality. I tried to convince him it was true but I could see that my protestations were adding to the entertainment of the evening, cheered on by Wilf, without doing anything for my credibility.

This story became a running joke between Wilf and myself on many walks. I was resigned to its promotion as one of my “fantasy” stories. This didn’t particularly bother me as I could see Wilf and the group extracting vast amusement from it, which in a way was a good outcome.

However my big chance at redemption came one day when a small group of us including Wilf set off on a three day walk from near Mittagong to Yerranderie. A friend of mine living in Moss Vale had been with me during the cruise liner beaching in South America and I had arranged for him to meet our group as we alighted from our train at Mittagong station. Finally I could produce an eye witness who could confirm my story to Wilf.

“This is Bill, Wilf”, I said, pushing Bill forward to shake Wilf’s hand. “He was with me in Terra del Fuego and he can confirm my story”.

Wilf shook Bill’s hand and looked at Bill and me quizzically. “The Terra del Fuego story again eh?” I could tell Wilf was passing judgement.

There was a moment’s silence, then Wilf’s face lit up like a candle. He smiled broadly, then he laughed.

“That’s a good one Roger. A great effort”. And with that Wilf walked away down the platform laughing. And that was the last that was ever said on that story.

Over the next three days on the walk I thought a lot about that incident and I think I found the answer I was looking for. The telling of a story and its reception was the important thing. Most stories were likely to be accurate reportings of what actually happened but that was not the point with Wilf. The story itself and the way it could lighten up a walk was the point. Walkers who knew Wilf’s style expected it and were rarely disappointed. It was why I looked forward to walking with him and one factor that made bushwalking live on his walks. We need more storytellers like Wilf.

Roger Treagus



Memories of walking with Wilf in 1990s

I joined SBW in the late nineties. Did all my test walks & Coolana within four weeks of joining, inspired by Wilf. I remember my first overnight pack walk. Such a useless pack, falling apart, overloaded, and staggering up the Illawarra Escarpment. As I recall, Wilf was doing a series of walks

along the length of the escarpment, from the Royal NP to the Shoalhaven River, and I did several of these with him.

A typical Wilf walk: Taxi to Avondale Colliery on escarpment near Dapto on Saturday morning. Bushbash to the top of Mars Pass (because we missed finding the track). Up onto the 4WD track bordering the Metropolitan Water Catchment above Lake Avon. Encounter with two Rangers in 4WD, asking what we are doing in the catchment. Wilf assured them we were just walking along the road, and would exit back down the escarpment to camp that night. As soon as they were gone however, we doubled back in the opposite direction to camp inside the catchment area, at Summit Dam, a great (illegal) swimming hole and camping spot! Thence down Calderwood spur on Sunday morning, back down the escarpment towards Tongarra. The aim was to climb the escarpment again "somewhere around" Macquarie Falls. Of course, there was insufficient time to find a way up, so we ended up doing a 17km bash up Macquarie Pass to catch the bus back to Wollongong Station – where we just missed the train! Never boring, walking with Wilf. The next stage of the walk involved illegal camping on the Barren Grounds....It was always an adventure, walking with Wilf!

Richard Darke



Wilf on Lindeman Pass – 1990.
Photo John Falloon.



Epilogue

As all these stories show, bushwalking with Wilf was never just about walking through the bush. It was much more. Wilf knew the bush like just a handful of other bushwalking legends. I stood on a ridgetop with Wilf once and he pointed out to me the names of every single ridge we could see. They were all his names.

The Epilogue has David Trinder's piece on Wilf's last "track and access report" to Confederation where he talked about a pass off Narrow Neck that only he knew about. And that one day he would unveil it to people.

One day someone will discover it. I wonder who it might be named after?

We finish this collection with a contribution from one of the people who perhaps knew Wilf Hilder best. It is Jim Smith's moving eulogy.

Wilf's Final Track
and Access Report

Wilf turned up at the Confederation General Meeting in May, about one month before he died. Everybody was amazed to see him because we knew he was very sick. He looked very weak, grey and thin and was using a walking stick, he must have walked from Ashfield station, about one kilometre away.

During the meeting he was asked for a Tracks and Access Report. I will repeat what he said and I don't think people who knew him will think ill of him because this is the way he talked and we liked him for it. "There is a pass on Narrow Neck between Redledge Pass and Dunphy's Pass and a lot of people think they know where it is but they are all wrong but I know where it is. I am not going to tell anybody I am going to take a group out and show them." On the way home in the car he said "I don't think I will ever walk again" and he did not.

David Trinder



Eulogy –
12 July 2011

Wilf Hilder, that great explorer of the Australian mountains, is now walking in "the undiscovered country" from which no traveller returns.

How full of life and enthusiasm he was when I first met him on Boxing Day 1982. He came to the reopening of a historic walking track in the Blue Mountains, the Gladstone Pass. This track intersected with the then uncleared Lindeman Pass track, built around 1910. At the junction I saw Wilf looking longingly up the old, heavily overgrown pathway. His desire to see it all led to us having our first big adventure together. Over a couple of years we found and re-cleared all six km of this historic pass between Wentworth Falls and Leura.

His energy and persistence in this task was remarkable, as was his ability to see the then very faint signs of ancient benching and stonework beneath more than half a century of leaf litter, debris and regrowth.

I wrote a book about the Lindeman Pass and I wanted Wilf to do a chapter for it. Many deadlines went by without him producing the promised material. The next time he visited I said "Okay Wilf we are not going walking this weekend. Here is pen and paper and a desk. I will bring you your meals and cups of tea until you have completed the work." I kept him virtually imprisoned for four days. It was worth it, because his eventual contribution to the book is a classic of bushwalking literature, with its dramatic tension, vivid descriptions of the bush and his self-deprecating humour. Reading it makes you wish more of his writing had been published.

Wilf and I later re-cleared virtually all the forgotten historic tourist walking tracks of the Blue Mountains, a total of close to 20 km. He particularly enjoyed the reopening ceremonies we held, when the local community was invited to see the long lost treasures we had uncovered. We received much criticism from the authorities responsible for the areas in which these old tracks lay and from some politicians. If you knew Wilf you will know that he was never discouraged by criticism or threats. These only made him more determined to do what he thought was right. When travelling along muddy sections of track, or over wet sloping rocks, he often told me that they were "as slippery as a politician's tongue".

Wilf was well-known for such humorous sayings. I lost count of the number of times I heard him say that "Blind Freddy without his guide dog" would have been able to see what was so obvious in his eyes, but perhaps not to others. I'm sure many of you have your own favourite Wilf Hilder expressions.

Wilf had a tremendous passion for finding evidence of past human activities, both black and white, in the bush. Aboriginal campsites, stone tools and art, any evidence of mining or logging, and traces of old roads, tracks and survey marks all excited him. He would discourse at great length about the significance of these artefacts. Once he had formed his theories as to their meaning, it was virtually impossible for him to entertain other viewpoints. Many of you would have heard him doggedly defending his historical interpretations against people who had once disagreed with him, sometimes years after the other parties had lost interest in the controversy.



In 1950s copies of the Waysider, the magazine of the Catholic bushwalking club, you will see a number of references to 'Big Julius'. Some of you may not have known that Julius was the name given to him by his parents. Wilfred was the name he gave himself. He was a big man: big of frame, and big in spirit, in generosity and in friendship.

Wilf was very generous in sharing information from his large collection of experiences and historical archives. He spend a lot of time replying to queries from bushwalkers and historians, finding and copying relevant documents and photos to send to them. His most common 'signoff' on his letters to friends was "good walking". Walking in wonder through the bushland was the expression of his spirituality. That is what he meant by "good walking".

One of his greatest gifts to me was to take me on three five to seven day walks through the heartland of the Gundungurra Aboriginal people in the southern Blue Mountains. I had told him that I felt I did not know the country of these people well enough for my planned thesis. He devised three epic walks following Aboriginal trails, sleeping at their campsites and dreaming where no white people had dreamed before. His knowledge of the Aboriginal way of life added great depths to my research.

It was always a revelation to stand on any high point in the Sydney, Blue Mountains or Alpine regions with Wilf and listen to him name every large and small feature in the landscape below. His brain held many wonderful maps which are now gone.

On his last day of life, Wilf was not able to move or communicate. He had often made up humorous names for the places we had walked together. I leaned close to him and referred to some of these personal place names. I could tell by the change in his breathing that he had heard me and remembered our visits there with fondness.

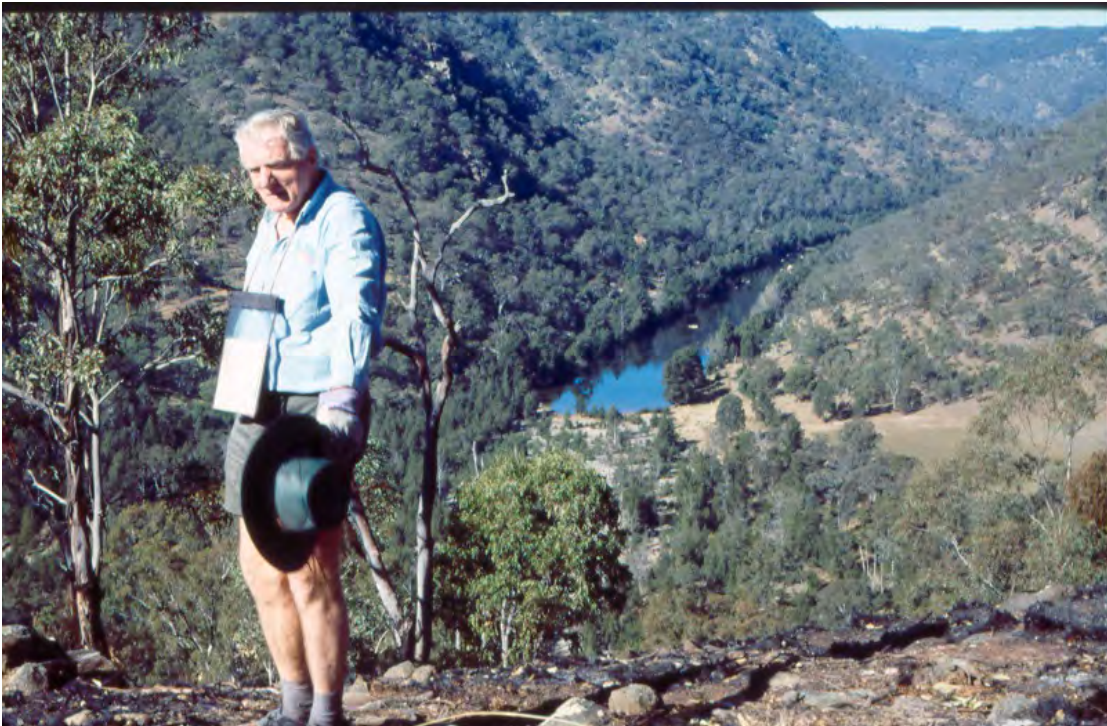
How do you say goodbye to someone who has given you almost 30 years of friendship? My last words to him were "thanks for all the memories". I know that many of you here have your own precious recollections of times with Wilf and would have said the same to him.

Jim Smith





Bogong High Plains - Dec 1996 (Ian Rannard).



On the Great River Walk at Canyonleigh in 2001 (Roger Treagus).



Contributors

Rob Barrie	John Poleson
Malcolm Brown	Suzi Prescott
Raf Byron	Tony Queitzsch
Bill Capon	Ian Rannard
Maureen Carter	Jan Roberts
George Catchpoole	Bob Salijevic
James Cryer	Jim Smith
Richard Darke	Roger Treagus
Beatrice Hilder-Yell	George Elliot
Paul Jennings	David Trinder
Ray Jerrems	Alan Wells
Michael Keats	Gretel Woodward
David Noble	Pam Organ
Judy O'Conner	

Appeal from Wilf Hilder's biographer, Jim Smith

I am collecting biographical material about Wilf Hilder. Part of this project has been to compile a bibliography of his published works. Curiously, it appears that he never wrote up an account of one of his trips for any of the magazines of the clubs that he belonged to. If anyone is aware of any articles by Wilf not included in my list, I would appreciate it if I could be sent the details. I would like to have copies of any letters from him and significant photos. There may be club magazine articles that include anecdotes about Wilf. Or, bushwalkers may be aware of interesting log book entries by Wilf.

I would greatly appreciate it if any contributions could be sent to Jim Smith. 65 Fletcher St., Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782. Alternatively they could be emailed to Ian Rannard at ir256@bigpond.com



Julius Wilfred (Wilf) Hilder (1934-2011)

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Aborigines to Bushwalkers. Chapter 3 in *Fitzroy Falls and Beyond*, edited by Jim Thompson, The Budawang Committee, 1988, pp 64-98.

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Coolana – some answers. Letter to the editor of the *Sydney Bushwalker*, Sept 1999, pp12-13.

Kosciusko Plan of Management Review, *The Sydney Bushwalker*, March 2003, pp 8-9.

Book Review, *As It Happened*. A book by Colin Watson. *The Sydney Bushwalker*, August 2005, p9.

Untitled article (profile on Ben Esgate) in *The Last of the Cox's River Men, Ben Esgate 1914 – 2003* by Jim Smith, Den Fenella Press, 2006, pp 116-118.

Interesting historical pieces are contained in Hilder's "Walks Secretary Notes" in various issues of *The Sydney Bushwalker* in the early 1970s but his most voluminous series of writings is contained in his "Tracks and Access" Reports for the NSW Confederation of Bushwalking clubs in the period 2003-2007. These were printed in whole or part in various bushwalking club magazines. They contained much historical information and showed his wide range of knowledge of bushwalking areas and included many controversial viewpoints. One example follows below,

"Katoomba Mining Tramways" (Part of Tracks and Access report for November 2007). *The Sydney Bushwalker*, December 2007, p9. Reprinted in *Into the Blue*, February 2008, p16.

In February 1976 Wilf Hilder, while research officer of the Resources and Operations Section of the NSW Lands Department, produced draft brochures entitled *Bushwalking and Canoeing in Bungonia State Recreation Area* and *List of Graded Walks in Bungonia Area*. Published versions of these have not been located.





Wilf and his sisters at Castlecrag.





Past Presidents Sydney Bush Walkers Club reunion 2000. Photo by Reg Alder.
Left to right Wilf Hilder, Greta James, Ian Debert, Bill Holland, Bob Hodgson, Helen Gray,
Bob Younger, Spiro Hajinakitas.



