

Greg Buckley Award



Pat Pickering and Greg Buckley in the Nepali restaurant 31 March 1990

Background

Greg Buckley became a member of the Canberra Bushwalking Club (CBC) in March 1987 and at the time of his death, 11 April 1990, was well known to Club members as an active walker and a participant in many Club activities. He was a committee member and had led a number of walks. He was only in his late twenties.

In March 1990 he joined a trek, led by CBC member John Balderson, to the Lantang Valley and Gosainkund in Nepal. It appears height was gained too quickly in the bus trip from Kathmandu to the start of the trek at Dunche on 2 April 1990. On 5 April 1990, at Lantang, north of Kathmandu and near Tibet, several people in the party were suffering from altitude sickness including Greg and at least five others. A rest day was called by leader John Balderson and the Nepali leader Sirdar Anu because of the number of people affected by the altitude (about 3800 metres). In Greg's case, two sherpas and two porters, following normal practice, took Greg to a lower altitude to recover at Ghoro Tobela. That was on 7 April 1990. The following day a message came to the party from the sherpas that Greg had not improved and should be evacuated by helicopter to the Kathmandu hospital. Despite having insurance cover for such eventualities, the party had to raise \$500 American dollars to pay for a helicopter. At about 11 am on 9 April the party was returning to Ghora Tabela when they saw the rescue helicopter coming in to land. Members of the party ran downhill towards the helicopter landing place to see Greg, but it landed and took off before they could get there. Greg was taken to hospital in Kathmandu and the party received a message through Sherpa Tenzing that Greg was recovering in hospital. The party continued the trek to another area (Gosainkund) and returned to civilization on 18 April 1990. It was then that they were told that Greg had died on 11 April. The news was devastating and totally unexpected.

The arrangements for his return were made through the Australian Consular Officer in Kathmandu who had visited the hospital before he died. Shirley Buckley (Greg's mother) asked the club to scatter Greg's ashes in the mountains that he loved. A special trip was organised to camp for the weekend up on Mt Kosciuszko and Greg's ashes were scattered there.

His parents' wish was that Greg's memory could be perpetuated in some way and the club set aside funds sourced partly from the sale of Greg's bushwalking gear for that purpose. Thus the Greg Buckley Award came into being.

Criteria

It is generally agreed that Greg's parents were non-specific about award criteria and those decisions were made by the club. Because the award was developed internally by the club the criteria could be changed if it was thought desirable.

Opinions differ as to the original criteria adopted by the club. The main dilemma is that some believe that the award was originally for contribution to the club's walking program, others believe that it was for contribution to the club as a whole, while others believe that at the beginning it was for contributions to the walking program and over time was widened to include contributions to the club as a whole. There are also multiple variations of these different recollections.

Copies of *it* in the nineties indicate that the contribution to the bushwalking program was the sole criteria used in the early years. Over later years the following has been regularly included in *it* "The Greg Buckley award is given annually to a CBC member who has made a significant contribution to the Club's activity program..." It is also significant that the annual award continues to be presented by the Walks Secretary as part of the walks awards.

From the above we can safely say that contribution to walks has been a major consideration in making the award. Unfortunately, because contributions to *it* must invariably reflect the memory and therefore opinion of the writer, we cannot rely on these as a definitive indication of the original intent or of subsequent changes. For this we have to rely on resolutions in the club minutes.

Committee minutes of meeting held on 19/5/1991 state that the Greg Buckley Award will be for "outstanding contribution to the club's walking program." All other committee minutes support this original intention and no later minutes have been found to indicate a change in criteria.

One tacit but unwritten assumption for the award is that it is a once-only thing (past winners not eligible).

It is evident that the original intention was that the annual award should be for contribution to the walks program (not necessarily in the current year) measured by quality of walks offered as well as by quantity with particular value being placed on walks that took in areas

not previously visited by the club or that were interesting variations of regular walks in frequently visited areas. Regularly leading walks over a number of years was a pre-requisite but recognition could also be given to other activities that enhanced the walking program. For example, David Campbell was awarded the Buckley not only for the walks he led but also for his role as the coordinator of the Club's Search and Rescue effort and the Club's Monolith Valley conservation project.

Selection Committee

Historically the selection committee has been the President, the Walks Secretary and another committee member. No member of the selection committee is eligible.

Trophy

The Committee approached a woodcarver/designer to come up with something from Huon pine. It was agreed that Huon Pine would be an excellent choice of timber and a design was then developed supposedly to show off the qualities of the timber. The outside of the trophy was accurate as discussed but it was supposed to be hollowed out on the inside like a vase, in order to show the timber at its best. Very thin Huon Pine objects can appear to be translucent and that is what was expected. The committee were somewhat disappointed at the finished article as it only had a small indentation in the top instead of being hollowed out. At one time there was talk about re-designing the "head" as it was nicknamed but to date no changes have been made. At the Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 26 June 2013 it was agreed to obtain quotes to have the trophy altered to achieve the design which was originally intended.

Presentation

Historically the presentation has been made by the Walks Secretary at the Annual General Meeting.

Past Awardees

Alan Vidler (1991)

Chris Leslie (1992)

George Carter (1993)

Vance Brown (1994)

Allan Mikkelsen (1995)

Richard Bain (1996)

Terence Uren (1997)

Jeff Bennetts (1998)

Meg McKone (1999)

David Campbell (2000)

Janet Edstein (2001)

Roger Edwards (2002)

Gösta Lyngå (2003)

Stan Marks (2004)

Keith Thomas (2005)

John Kelly (2006)

Rupert Barnett (2007)

John Evans (2008)

Doug Wright (2009)

Rob Horsfield (2010)

Jenny Horsfield (2011)

Linda Groom (2012)

Alison Milton (2013)

Ian Wright (2014)

Karen Cody (2015)

Quentin Moran (2016)