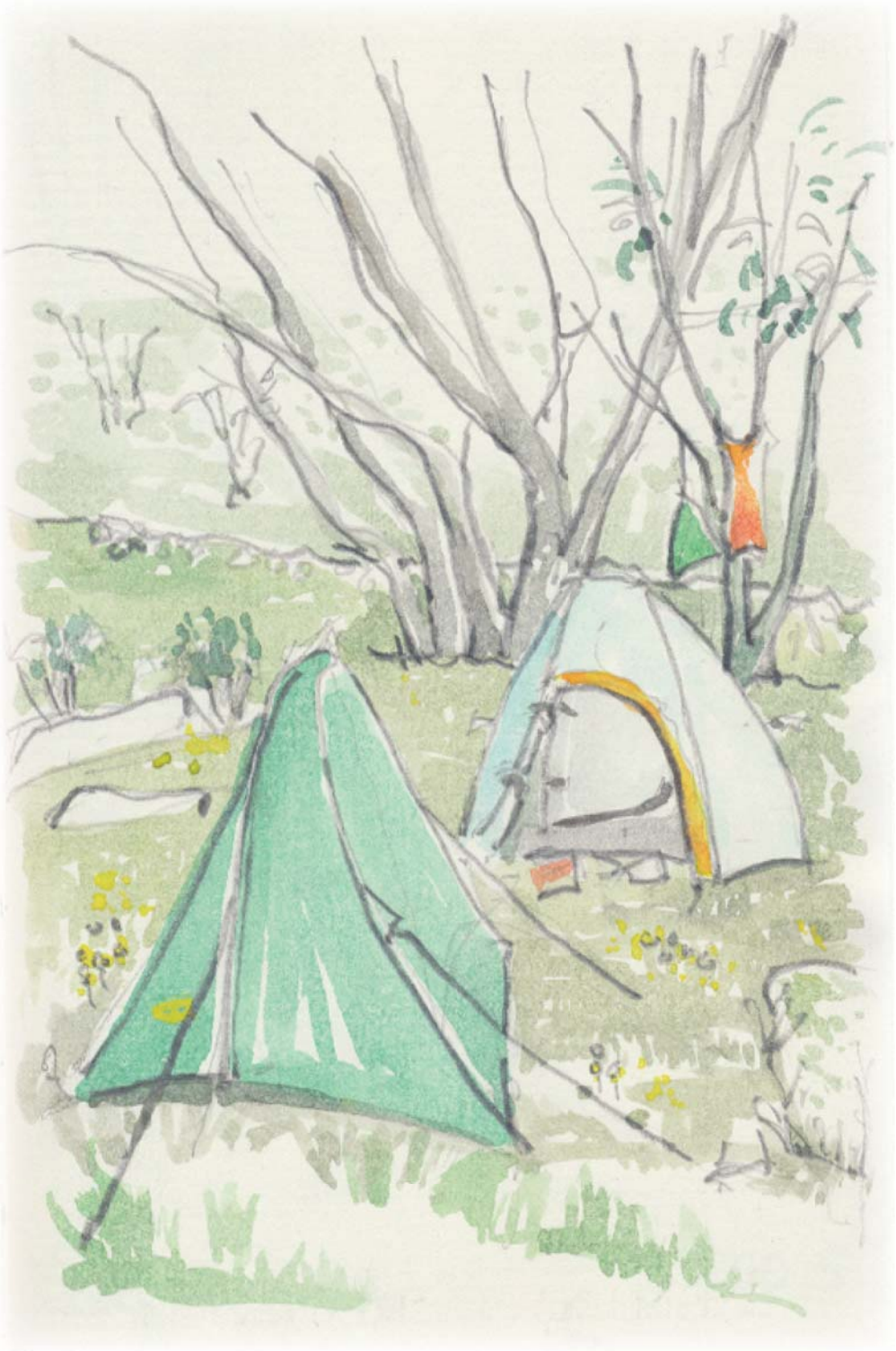
Canberra Bushwalking Club

50th Anniversary



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www.canberrabushwalkingclub.org

Published by the Canberra Bushwalking Club 2011

www.canberrabushwalkingclub.org

Cover: gum leaf and painting by Cynthia Breheny

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Foreword

As the recent past president it gives me great pleasure to provide a few words to introduce this publication of diverse articles from those who make up the Canberra Bushwalking Club. These articles provide you with a unique view into the activities and lives of those that have made this great Club. As you read these articles you will learn of the passion, energy and enthusiasm of those that have contributed to the Club over the past 50 years.

The authors will share with you their views and memories of the challenges, successes and disappointments. In addition, you will find romance, sentimental attachment to old equipment (fortunately there was no reference to my 35 year pack, recently deceased), collaboration with other clubs, member profiles, and the history of the Club through the eyes of founding members.

For those in the Club this will be a great way to revisit many bushwalking memories. For new and future bushwalkers, it will inspire them to take on the pleasures and challenges to be found in bushwalking, whether it be in the ACT, Northern Territory or overseas.

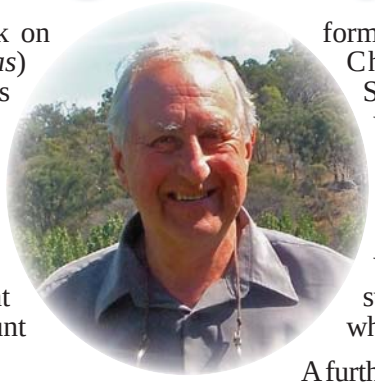
The Club has demonstrated its commitment to conservation through a number of initiatives including the annual broom clearing and remedial work on walking tracks. First aid and safety are also a key part of the Club's culture. There are a number of articles highlighting the work of the Club.

A great publication such as this does not happen by accident. Many thanks to Cynthia Burton, Cynthia Breheny, Alison Milton, Gösta Lyngå, Quentin Moran, Doug Wright, Karen Cody and Jenny Horsfield for getting this publication from an idea to conclusion. The wonderful contributions from so many people including authors, poets, photographers and artists ensure there is something for everyone to appreciate.

Peter R Jones

How it all started

Remember the good old days – these!



It appears from Matthew Higgins' book on the Brindabellas (*Skis on the Brindabellas*) that the Canberra Bushwalking Club was the fourth group to organise bush walks in Canberra (the first, without a name, formed in the late 1920s; the second, the Canberra Alpine Club (CAC), in 1934; and the third, the Canberra Walking and Touring Club (CWTC), in 1947). Having initiated the move for the fourth club, in 1961, I thought you might be interested in a personal account of how it happened.

I arrived in Canberra from New Zealand in March, 1960. Over there I had walked and climbed with the mighty Tararua Club and in Tasmania to pursue a PhD I joined the Hobart Walking Club. Back in Canberra though there was no walking club and suffering withdrawal symptoms I began at first to organise trips at University House where I was living. This proved only partly satisfactory because few were interested in weekend walks and also because food supply was a problem. One day as I walked down the corridor surreptitiously clutching three lunch packs the passing Master of University House, Professor Trendall, audibly whispered "Pig!"

The search for something better led me to an interview with an officer of the CAC who explained that while his group had organised bush walks in the past it now focused almost entirely on skiing and ski touring. He pointed me down a track to one Jack Leslie who had been the 1947 foundation President of the CWTC. The CWTC had taken its name from the Melbourne Walking and Touring Club (formed 1894) and included as members, people like Jack who had been transferred to Canberra with their Commonwealth departments.

Jack told me that the Club had not been active since the early 1950s (1950 or at the latest 1951). There had been transport problems and other annoyances. To illustrate the latter he told me about the time when he was at a crucial stage in the middle of a vital meeting with the head of the Patents Office where he worked and a call had come through for him which was said to be very urgent. Handed the phone by his boss the caller asked whether it would be a good idea to bring sausages on the forthcoming weekend walk! After talking to Jack I sounded out a number of other people about the idea of forming a new club as a revival of the CWTC, notably Gösta Lyngå, Ted Wishart and Ken Kerrison. The feeling was positive as long as there was no clash with the activities of the CAC and the newly established ACT National Parks Association (NPA), (formed in March 1960) that was running day excursions as part of its conservation programme.

The outcome of all these soundings was a preliminary meeting in Gösta's flat at University House on 15 November 1961 at which an interim committee was formed, comprising Jack Leslie (interim Chairman), Margot Cox (interim Secretary), Noel Semple and myself with the responsibility of reorganising and reconstituting the CWTC. Other people present included David Gibson, Pauline Hiscox (later Lyngå), Fay Moore (later Kerrison) and John Wanless. Another person who was supportive of the move was Julie Henry who was centrally involved with the NPA.

A further meeting to get things underway was held at Margot Cox's flat on 29th November. The notice for the meeting said ' …since the group fell into abeyance Canberra has grown from a small town into a sizeable city and ...it is now large enough to support a separate independent walking club'. The subscription was fixed at five shillings and the first monthly meeting was arranged for 17 January 1962 at the home of the Acting President, Jack Leslie. A new committee was appointed with Jack Leslie as Acting President, myself as Secretary, Ken Kerrison as Acting Treasurer and Ted Wishart as Committee Member. Unfortunately both Gösta and I missed this meeting being away climbing in the Mt Cook area of New Zealand.

In the meantime the committee drew up the first walks programme for the period February to April, 1962. The first programmed walk was for 3–4 February 1962—Upper Cotter–Bimberi—(graded easy/medium). It was listed to be led by two members of the old CWTC, Bert Bennett and Jack Leslie and attracted five walkers. The trip for March 24–25 was a traverse of the Budawangs (grade hard) with separate parties starting from east and west and exchanging of cars. By the time the parties left the initial plan of camping together on 'top of the Castle' had been changed to 'top of Mt Renwick' (Mt Owen). This proved to be hopelessly optimistic. The eastbound party made it to Renwick but the westbound group pitched camp in the dark in the Valley of the Monoliths and was unable to make contact in spite of much shouting. On Sunday morning, fearing that the parties would miss one another (and the all important key exchange would not occur), the west-bounders got going very early and rushed to the top of Renwick to find the east-bounders having a leisurely breakfast. Now lawyers could get to work on the question of which was actually the new club's first walk. Perhaps that is why Gösta Lyngå, as leader, speaks of the trip to Bungonia Gorge on 25–26 November 1961 as the Club's 'precursor walk'. Gösta and several others understandably could not wait for a walks programme. Included among those who went on the Bungonia trip were Pauline Hiscox, Jenny Wilson (later Gibson) and Hugh Morris.

The Club Constitution was ratified at the first annual meeting held on 21 February 1962. This provided for objects covering arrangement of trips, environmental

education, conservation, and compilation of local bushwalking information. The exclusion of the drafted clause 'and to promote social activity among walkers' was perhaps one reason why later some members called for the appointment of a club morals officer. The seven member committee appointed at the first annual meeting was: Secretary – Hugh Morris; Treasurer – Ken Kerrison; President – Geoff Mosley; other Committee Members: Gösta Lyngå, Jack Leslie, Ted Wishart and Erwin Koch-Emmery After the elections and the report on three trips (Bimberi—report by Margot Cox, Brindabellas—by Ken Kerrison and Tinderries—Gösta Lyngå), Gösta and I gave an illustrated talk about our climbing trip to the Southern Alps of New Zealand.

Out of deference to the members of the old CWTC, such as Jack Leslie, Margot Cox and Bert Bennett, it was informally decided to use the name Canberra Walking and Touring Club for the time being but there was a general sense that it was a new beginning and agreement that the question of the name should be kept under review. The change to Canberra Bushwalking Club took place in February 1965.

The club had been formed at a propitious time. Ahead were not only many inspiring walks, rock climbing and orienteering, but major conservation challenges in the ACT and Kosciuszko, and some fairly active social activities. Who could ask for more?

Acknowledgement: I am very grateful for the assistance of the following: Gösta Lyngå (who will lead the second anniversary walk to Bungonia on 19–20 November this year); Noel Semple (whose membership lapsed in 1967 but who rejoined in 2001); Doug Wright (as enthusiastic as ever) and the late Geoff Marston. Noel kindly contacted Bert Bennett for me (one of the foundation members of the original Canberra Walking and Touring Club). Six memories are better than one.

Geoff Mosley

Tired Legs

I was unhappy at work, felt pushed out by an up-and-coming young manager. I took long service leave to 'think about it'. The very first Wednesday I was out there with the group, on Mt Rob Roy.

The track stretched ahead. D came up beside me and talked about the Great North Walk next month, and other Great Pack Walks that we might do together. I dreamed a bit… and suddenly I was on the ground in agony! Sandshoed foot had slipped on the loose gravel of the track.

An obviously broken ankle and my friends phoned for a helicopter. They were quite excited about this. Luckily for me, it was lunchtime and the chopper was being serviced. Eventually a couple of ambos arrived in a four wheel drive. They had cut through fences. They gave me morphine and took me in to the Woden hospital.

Six weeks with leg up. Time to read a book called *What is Superannuation?* and to pen a letter of resignation. I never went back to work. As soon as possible I became a regular Wednesday Walker enjoying the delights of the Namadgi and Tidbinbilla Ranges.

Tidbinbilla
hilltop, I listen to silence,
bask in winter sun

Many of the walks were led by Allan M, always shorted and booted and with such intimate local knowledge. I never saw him refer to a map. And he was always ready to stop and play at the next granite tor. Always a climber, I followed him joyfully.

hakea prickles
tired legs as we stumble
down Nursery Hill

The fires of 2003 coincided with heart disease symptoms for me. Neither Namadgi nor I have ever really recovered. It was the end of my pack walking. But I worked at cardiac rehab and got back some fitness. Four months after surgery I was back to the Wednesday Walks. The first one I managed was up Mt Orroral in bare ash and the distant ranges heard my elated yell 'Yeeeehhh!' on the summit rocks.

stark burnt alpine ash
at thirteen hundred metres,
desolate and fierce

In the aftermath of heart problems I changed my diet, and the bushwalking lunch became a ritual tin of sardines with a few biscuits. Generally sitting on a rock with my back to a burnt tree trunk, using an ambient twig to tease the sardines out of the tin. Sometimes I lay down afterwards, embracing the Earth until the leader's call to move on.

wandering high tors,
curving granite cuts blue sky,
I eat my sardines

There was a time when the walks became over popular, especially on gloriously fine autumn days, and there was talk of splitting the group. I don't know whether this actually happened.

up the spur panting,
pushing through regrowth,
twenty-nine in line

Then in 2008 I did a huge walk in England, 800 km in seven weeks, got very fit but finished up with a hip injury. It was overuse! I'd pushed the ageing body too far. It took a year to recover, and I've never got back to the Wednesday Walks. Well I haven't yet! I'm not sure if it has really come to an end. I still get the weekly email, get the maps out, ponder the route. The thought of scrub bashing through regrowth often puts me off. Have I become a Wednesday Armchair Walker?

high on Mount Tennant,
dark clouds massing, rain falling
beyond the beyond.

Gerry Jacobson

Untangling history

My very first ever bushwalk was a long weekend trip to Bungonia Gorge, organised under the auspices of the Canberra Alpine Club and led by Frank Cook.

That was long before a separate bushwalking club operated. The one started up in the late 1940s, the Canberra Walking and Touring Club, (CWTC) derived from a similarly titled Melbourne group, had bled to death a few years after its founding. Several hard-core members of the skiing-oriented Canberra Alpine Club (CAC) bushwalked in summer, gathering around themselves others of a like mind. Canberra was still too small to support an independent walking group; the seasonally-active Bushies section—besides probably serving as a minor recruitment source for future skiers—kept the CAC alive during summer and autumn, after the end of the ski season and with it the end of many skiers' interest in the club. Indeed the Bushies were so effective in this role that for some time the Club's active walker tail more or less wagged the CAC dog, particularly if winter brought poor snow cover.

Then as Canberra grew, its rather restless population became more settled. The perennial difficulties with organising transport eased as people became able to afford cars. More began to afford the fairly expensive skiing set-up costs; more people went skiing; more joined the two Canberra clubs: CAC, and the YMCA Ski Club. Slowly these clubs began to acquire or build accommodation huts in the Kosciuszko area; skiers no longer had to depend on the ACT mountains' very unreliable snow cover. It all led to a focussing and stabilisation of membership.

At that point the Bushies came up against conflicting priorities. The skiers began to protest against walking trips being programmed during winter, or for summer weekends when CAC working bees were scheduled. By now there were bushwalkers not particularly interested in the skiing side, and even less in the membership fee increases needed to meet clubhouse overheads. What had began as a useful cooperative arrangement no longer worked satisfactorily for the walkers. Canberra, the Bushies now began to think, should now be big enough to support an independent club. So, despite a few nostalgic regrets, we decided to go our own way.

I must admit to some selfish interest in secession, since it would rid me of a personal millstone. I had suffered lengthy terms as editor of the evocatively titled CAC newsletter *Frozen Acres*. The gods for their own reasons always tended to lumber me with the newsletter editorship; it's a thankless task.

However, the Bushies CAC divorce was not without certain diplomatic considerations. Though the skiers didn't particularly want us, there were some who would object to anyone else—even ourselves—halving up. I think they looked on a break as weakening for the CAC. One or two Bushies spoke up in favour of seeking attachment to the YMCA Ski Club; but this was vetoed as raising the same problems as we were trying to escape. Besides there was considerable rivalry – more or less friendly – between CAC and the YMCASC. Any such amalgamation would likely be even more poorly received than outright independence. It was therefore politically very inadvisable.

Most people wanted to set ourselves up, then and there, as Canberra Bushwalkers or similar, a brand new club and devil take it. But several who were more privy to CAC opinion polls felt that our secession would be accepted more kindly, and diplomatic relations better preserved if we merely exhumed the corpse of Jack Leslie's old Canberra Walking and Touring Club. Technically it still existed, never having been formally disbanded. Though I had never had anything to do with the CWTC (it was well and truly moribund before I arrived in Canberra), I supported this cooler counsel; in the end it prevailed. CWTC we became until, after a couple of years, the skiers had forgotten about us and enough new blood had swelled our ranks to agitate for a name change. We became the Canberra Bushwalking Club – the name we'd have chosen in the first place but for diplomatic expediency.

And so—back to Bungonia. Many times, as it turned out, for it was frequented by the cavers as well as the bushwalkers. Not, though, as often for me as for Frank Cook. Even after he removed to Sydney he continued to visit and conduct trips to Bungonia. Last heard, he was close to three-figure returns.

WA country-raised, I was used to roaming farm bushland. But I'd given it little thought since fetching up to earn a reasonable honest living as a public service graduate clerk in the National Capital. Several of my fellow-graduates likewise fetched up, it being one of the few alternatives to the currently approved female careers in typing, teaching, and nursing. Among them Pixie Price, whom I'd known at Uni, appeared at the same government hostel; she it was who talked me into the Bungonia trip as a preferable option to a boring long weekend at the hostel. How Pixie discovered the bushwalking group in general and this trip in particular, I'm not certain. She may have seen it advertised on the hostel notice board and followed it up via one of her many admirers. In company with Pixie for moral support, I set off with borrowed tent, borrowed groundsheet, borrowed sleeping-bag, borrowed cooking utensils, and borrowed rucksack to put them in. Plus food as per recommendation passed to Pixie from our leader. At least I had my own clothes although I took with me a rather nervous state of mind; I was still a shy little country girl and would never have undertaken such an adventure without Pixie's urging.

Three aspects of that trip combined to turn me into an unrepentant Bushie for life: absolutely perfect weather; the infectious friendliness and camaraderie of the party; and the wildly spectacular Bungonia scenery—coming as I did from south-west WA's rolling low relief countryside, it utterly blew my little mind. If this was

what you had to do to get to such absolutely magic places, then oh boy! I was in it for the long haul. Pixie, whose petite figure, long blond wavy hair, blue eyes, and pink cheeks belied a surprisingly tough little walker, continued as a frequent starter until she found a job in Melbourne. Regretfully, I lost touch with her then.

Thus began many years of wonderfully scenic country, crazy adventures, memorable incidents, quirky personalities, lifelong friendships. Balanced only against a horde of blistered heels, uncounted scratches and bruises, and more sore and aching muscles than I care to recall. It all came about from a combination of Pixie's persuasiveness and the prospect of a dull and lonely hostel long weekend.

For a couple of years the conventional upbringing implanted by my mother prevented me from joining overnight trips—and even sometimes one-day walks—unless the party included at least one other female. But I found I missed out on far too many fascinating-sounding places that I dearly liked to visit. By now I knew most of the regular starters well enough to feel that I was among friends; eventually, if a trip went some place I wanted to see, I signed on regardless. The main limiting factors became the degree of trip difficulty, and/or a tiger-walker leader. Among the really tough I could never be numbered. If I inadvertently scored a tiger as leader who three-quarters killed me, I avoided future serious trips with that leader. I could handle being half-killed; it was par for most longer trips anyway. But three-quarters tended to sear my soul as well as my body. Ken Kerrison always contended that Margot continued to bushwalk only because she had a short memory; by the time the next trip came up, she'd forgotten how awful the preceding one was.

All very well, but it is a regrettable fact that the more ghastly the trip the more memorable it becomes and in retrospect the more interesting. An easy scramble up Mt Gudgenby followed by leisurely lunch on the summit while you contemplate 360° views on a glorious mountain day, leaves no scar at all on the psyche. On the other hand, you don't readily forget a relentless bash up Mt Tinderry's western slopes through wringing wet scrub in steady drizzling rain, stumbling over fallen logs and broken chunks of lava-flow rocks at every second step, with an icy westerly whipping past your ears. (It was years before we discovered that the track over the range gave ready vehicular access to the southern saddle turning the Tinderries into quite an easy day walk, no matter the weather). But in the earlier situation you are kept going only by the knowledge that in your rucksack is a dry tent, a dry sleeping-bag, a dry change of clothes—and a packet of chicken noodle soup, comfort food for generations of bushwalkers.

Margot Cox

Member Profile

Reet Vallak

Reet Vallak is the longest continuous member of the Canberra Bushwalking Club. Reet came to Canberra in March 1964 to work at Mt Stromlo, both as an astronomer and to manage their new IBM computer. In the end she spent most of her time with the computer as it required a great deal of managing!

She joined the YMCA Ski Club, which also attracted many people who were keen bushwalkers. Before long, in 1965, Reet had joined the Canberra Bushwalking Club. There were many memorable trips: she recalls a day trip to the Tinderries ('just as scrubby then… ') led by a girl from the British Embassy. Quite a lot of people from the embassies walked with the Club during their time in Canberra. At the Club's general meetings, people gave brief descriptions of past walks and previews of future walks… so you knew what to expect from any particular leader! Bob Story was one of the good leaders at that time, and Reet remembers some great weekend walks in the Snowy Mountains and Budawangs with Bob. Doug Wright was Club President at the time, and an active walks leader.

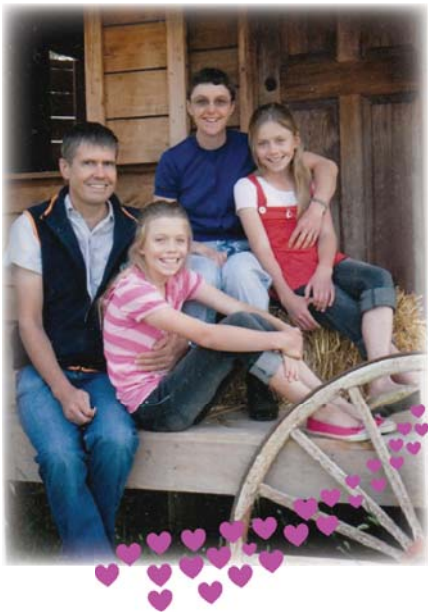
Gourmet walk to Old Currango, November 1967
Photo by Ken May

Reet was on the trip in November 1976 when the Club took parliamentarians up Mt Kelly to show them the potential to create a national park in the ACT.

As one of our very early members, Reet is still a paid-up member of CBC. These days her main outdoor involvement is with Cooleman Ridge Park Care Group; she is also a talented landscape painter and photographer.

Romance on the trail

Many successful partnerships and marriages have been born during CBC bushwalks over the years. Just to name a few: Alan and Sue Vidler, Gösta and Pauline Lyngå, Mike Morriss and Margaret Cole, Michael Sutton and Janet Wheeler, Janet and Paul Edstein, Chris Roper and Cynthia Burton, Jill Bell and Barry Keeley, and the list goes on…



One particularly humorous and lovely story of a couple meeting through the CBC is that of Roger and Rosemarie Edwards. On 5 May 1990, Roger decided to join a bushwalk to Square Rock. On that fateful day, Rosemarie was in the car he joined to drive to the start point of the walk. Roger recalls looking at the young woman seated next to him and thinking: "hmmmm, not bad looking."

Rosemarie, on the other hand, cringed back in her seat and 'looked definitely unimpressed.' Roger had just returned from a long trek in Nepal, where he had been ill, so presented as a scrawny-looking guy with a scruffy beard.

In the months that followed, Roger had the opportunity to shave and make a better impression on Rosemarie on other bushwalks. When he joined a weekend walk that she led to the south coast and camped at her parent's farm; on the Sunday morning, very early, they paddled down Dignam's Creek whilst the rest of the party slept in their tents. After this Rosemarie joined the TPAs (a small group of bike riders, canoeists and walkers to which Roger belonged) on a week's Christmas canoe trip. Roger also got to see Rosemarie in his role as the CBC's equipment officer, on which occasions he sometimes drove her and her bicycle home in the evening and 'chatted.'

During a walk up Cow Flat Creek (west side of Mt Tidbinbilla), Rosemarie fell several metres during a rock scramble and injured herself. Roger was first on the spot to administer first aid and accompanied her to the hospital. Things just progressed from there and the couple have never looked back!

Roger and Rosemarie have now been married for over 18 years and have two 16-year-old twin daughters, Kelly and Simone.

They still walk regularly with the Club.

The tale of the Pelion Pixie

Once upon a time, on a far off island, there was a little pixie. He had a bright red coat and stockings with red stripes. The pixie was staying in a hut named Pelion.

The pixie was a merry friendly soul who liked to climb mountains with his friends. But one day his happiness was shattered when someone took his precious vest. On the rack in its place was a huge one that would have stretched down far beyond his feet.

In deep alarm, he hurried all around the hut, demanding of everyone staying there whether they had taken his vest and left a big blue one instead. Everyone in the hut said they had not taken any vest, and he became increasingly agitated.

In pixie language, some words have strange meanings. As there were no others in the hut who knew pixie language, there was no-one to tell the poor fellow that he was missing what everyone else would call a rainjacket.

A hairy giant was staying in the hut at the same time. Being a good giant of kindly disposition, he took pity on the distressed little pixie, and went looking for the vest. When he came to the rack he found that his own big blue rainjacket, which he thought he had put in his rucksack, was still there. He had mistakenly packed away the pixie's jacket!

The little pixie was overjoyed when the hairy giant gave him back his precious 'vest'. To make him even happier, the hairy giant's friend the flower princess gave the pixie a book, which he gratefully accepted, and he scurried off to his bunk to read it.

And they all lived happily ever after, especially the hairy giant when he next needed to wear his rainjacket.

Jeff Bennetts

50 years of hard working Committee members

There are many CBC members who have generously given their time and energy to help keep the Club running over the past 50 years. Some of the important voluntary contributions of these people behind the scenes have included: orienting and registering new members; producing a high quality newsletter and web site; putting together an extensive and diverse walks program; providing opportunities for subsidised first aid training and other measures to ensure the safety of walks; contributing submissions to environmental policy development in the ACT and NSW; organising interesting monthly presentations and special events; and managing the CBC's finances.

There are a number of individuals who have served in multiple committee roles over several years. The three members of the CBC who have served the longest on the committee are:

1. Allan Mikkelsen

2. Roger Edwards

3. Rob Horsfield

While there is not the space to name everyone who has served on the committee, the occasion of the CBC's 50th anniversary offers a good opportunity to thank these people for the years of bushwalking pleasure they have quietly helped to make happen for the rest of us.

When various past and present committee members were asked why they have volunteered for these roles, the answer was usually 'it was a way to give back something to a club that has served me so well.' Some also saw serving on the committee as an opportunity to share the knowledge and experience that they had in areas as diverse as navigation, desk top publishing and environmental conservation; others saw it as a chance to learn new skills in supporting the work of a community organisation.

Alison Milton, who has served on the committee for the past 5 years, reflects this experience:

> *"I really wanted to make a contribution to the Club, given the access and opportunities it had given me to enjoy bushwalking, especially through the people who offer to drive for those like myself without a car. When the committee position of Editor became available, this was something I knew how to do, and I readily nominated for it. As the Club's Editor, I love the challenge of putting together the monthly newsletter, while also contributing to other decisions and work behind the scenes, but mostly I feel I am giving something back to the Club in the best way that I can."*

All those interviewed feel that serving on the committee has been a good experience and hope that other members will continue to step up to take on these roles and—most importantly—to inject the fresh ideas and new ways of doing things that are vital to keeping the CBC vibrant and active for its next 50 years. So if you haven't been a committee member yet, give it a go!

Cold mornings on the track

Headlamps through the mist, is there something that I've missed?
I could be home, still warm in bed, instead of doing this!
Breakfast before dawn, fingers far from warm
What possessed me to get into this, the long-distance walker's norm?

I might be barking mad, though I'm feeling such a thrill
There's satisfaction doing things few others ever will.
The Eastern sky gets brighter, and along with it my mood
It's good to get a mug of tea and some warm (though stodgy) food.

Sky no longer black, it's time to hit the track
We still have several more long days if we're to make it back.
What an experience it's been, for Karen, Mike and 'Rene
The Australian Alps Walking Track is something to be seen.

Mike Baker
[written on the AAWT, April 2010]

Past Committee members

The Club would not function effectively without the dedicated persons volunteering their time and expertise on the Club's Committee. Committee positions have varied over time and there have been some interesting sub-committees. Interestingly, in the Minutes of the General Meeting of 21 November 1962 Julie Henry recommended the purchase of an Italian hemp rope costing about 5 pounds. After long discussion it was decided to form a sub-committee to discuss the issue.

At the meeting on 23 January 1963 a Rope Committee was appointed, with Gösta Lyngå appointed as convenor. Other members were: Julie Henry, Geoff Mosley, Peter Hancock and David Prosser. A letter from the rope sub-committee in January 1963 advised the Club to buy a 120 foot nylon rope, extra weight, from Britain.

And we thought today's Committee members had enough decisions to make.

Today's Committee has expanded to cover the many aspects in which the Club is involved, with the recent addition of Web Manager. However, two key positions are the President and the Walks Secretary. While in the first year the Club seemed to function without a Walks Secretary, it certainly wouldn't today, and of course, the President is the driving force behind the Committee. Looking back through the archives, Rob Horsfield has most often held the position of Walks Secretary. Under the Club's constitution, the President can only hold the position for two consecutive years. In the early years this position seemed to change every year but in the later years it became more common for the position to be held for the two year limit allowed under the Constitution. The title of longest serving President is shared by Rene Davies and Stan Marks, both with four years of service in this position.

The full list of the holders of President and Walks Secretary for the past 50 years follows below:

Year	President	Walks Secretary
1961/62	Jack Leslie (A/g)	N/A
1962/63	Geoff Mosley	N/A
1963/64	Geoff Marston	Dave Gibson
1964/65	Harry Black	Harriet McInnes
1965/66	Doug Wright	Miep Molijn
1966/67	John Wanless	Sybil Story
1967/68	John Cashman	Sue Brierley
1968/69	Sybil Story	Jim Collins
1969/70	John Hogan	Karl Sienkowski
1970/71	Campbell McKnight	Frank Rigby
1971/72	Robin Miller	Adrian Hobbs
1972/73	Peter van der Duys	Richard Kemmis
1973/74	Dave Whiteley	Dan Buchler
1974/75	Richard Kemmis	Terry Jordan
1975/76	Alan Vidler	Gary Medaris
1976/77	Wendy Davidson	Jenny Bauer Jeff Bennetts
1977/78	Henry Burmester	Ann Gibbs-Jordan
1978/79	Henry Burmester	Tim Wright
1979/80	Penny Le Couteur	Rod Peters
1980/81	Rod Peters	Ann Gibbs-Jordan
1981/82	Ann Gibbs-Jordan	John Street
1982/83	Alison McKenzie	Alan Vidler
1983/84	Melanie O'Flynn	David Truman
1984/85	Alan Vidler	David Truman
1985/86	Rene Davies	Bob Harrison

Year	President	Walks Secretary
1986/87	Rene Davies	Alan Vidler
1987/88	Greg Ellis	George Carter
1988/89	Anton Cook	Mike Morriss
1989/90	David Campbell	Alan Vidler
1990/91	David Campbell	Allan Mikkelsen
1991/92	Allan Mikkelsen	Chris Leslie
1992/93	Allan Mikkelsen	Gerald Dodgson
1993/94	Gerald Dodgson	Maurice Wicks
1994/95	Janet Edstein	Alan Vidler
1995/96	Janet Edstein	Paul Rustomji
1996/97	Chris Roper	Paul Rustomji
1997/98	Chris Roper	Allan Mikkelsen
1998/99	Alan Vidler	Rob Horsfield
1999/00	Terence Uren	Rob Horsfield
2000/01	Terence Uren	Rob Horsfield
2001/02	Jenny Horsfield	Meg McKone
2002/03	Jenny Horsfield	Meg McKone
2003/04	Stan Marks	Rob Horsfield
2004/05	Stan Marks	Rob Horsfield
2005/06	Rene Davies	Rob Horsfield
2006/07	Rene Davies	Rob Horsfield
2007/08	Stan Marks	Rob Horsfield
2008/09	Stan Marks	Rob Horsfield
2009/10	Peter Jones	Jeff Bennetts
2010/11	Peter Jones	Rob Horsfield
2011/12	Phillip Starr	Rob Horsfield

The revolution in outdoors equipment

Australia emerged from WW2 as a newly industrialised nation where we made our own aircraft, the first Holden, electronics and other sophisticated manufactured products. The army was equipped with backpacks and webbing made from heavy duty canvas that, while sturdy, were uncomfortable and had limited 'in pack' capacity.

Nine years prior to WW2 Paddy Pallin began manufacturing lightweight (for the time) bushwalking gear from the materials then available—heavy canvas, leather and cotton. With the end of WW2, quantities of ex-army gear began appearing in the then common 'disposals stores' while Paddy Pallin's and other companies' (including Flinders Ranges and Roman) equipment once again became available to walkers.

The availability of equipment was, to a considerable extent, dictated by the ability of Australian manufacturers to produce suitable materials. From this time until the Whitlam government's tariff reforms in the 1970s, Australian industry was protected behind high tariff walls that virtually eliminated competition from imported products.

This resulted in Australian bushwalking manufacturers benefiting from a closed market but in which innovation languished. Little progress was made in improving the comfort, weight, attractiveness or weather resistant properties of outdoors equipment until the tariff walls tumbled down. Meanwhile, developments overseas, particularly in the United States, led to a revolution in the design of bushwalking equipment.

The probable start of the revolution was led by Dick Kelty, the founder of Kelty Pack Corporation. According to his own account, whilst out backpacking in the USA his partner accidentally stuck the ends of his wooden framed high load carrying packboard into both rear pockets of his pants. The effect was instantaneous. The heavy load on his shoulders was largely transferred to his hips and the modern rucksack era began.

Dick began to build on his discovery experimenting with waist/hip load carrying methods. Out of this research first came the waist belt then the load carrying hip belt. He combined this innovation with packs made out of nylon and aluminium together with padded shoulder straps, the first of which sold in 1952. These materials then became widely available and cheap with the end of the Korean War. Large quantities of war surplus parachute nylon and aluminium tubing were the perfect materials to fashion into a new generation of packs, parkas and tents. By the early 1960s various USA manufacturers were producing a range of these new products that combined lightweight materials with thoughtful design—meanwhile Australian manufacturers slept behind the security of our tariff walls.

The late CBC member Steve Gisz wearing an old Paddy Pallin Federation Pack on his back and a transitional pack on his chest (and a thousand flies)

Our gear available then was characterised by solid steel framed rucksacks with heavy canvas bags that, admittedly, were tough and suited to pushing through heavy scrub and canyoning. They were neither light, ergonomically friendly nor comfortable. Further, the weight of the bag was a significant percentage of the total weight of a weekend pack. Combine that with a heavy duty cotton japara tent that leaked the moment you brushed against it and an inadequate proofed japara parka, and long trips could be misery. The 'major' innovations prior to 1975 seemed to be slide-on foam rubber pads for the leather straps of Australian packs and collapsible aluminium tent poles. Some nylon cloth was manufactured in Australia in this period but it was largely ignored by our local gear makers.

I became aware of our backwardness on a CBC trip to Cave Creek in 1968, when John Cashman, fresh back from the USA, brought a Kelty Corporation high loading, curved aluminium frame, hip belt and a light but tough nylon pack bag. It was a moment not unlike that which the American Indians must have felt when seeing European sailing ships. The existing Australian manufacturers lost me at that moment. No more purchases of locally-made leaky japara tents and parkas, inadequate cold weather sleeping bags and spine crushing packs. Having no access to Kelty packs I compromised, when in NZ a few months later, I bought a non-ergonomic though lightweight canvas and aluminium pack made by Mountain Equipment.

In 1972 I was able to go to the USA and returned with a Gerry pack that occasionally I still use. Later in 1975 after visiting REI and other gear stores, I acquired my first double skin aluminium pole nylon tent and a warm as toast sleeping bag. After the reduction in tariffs the then established local manufacturers made a lukewarm attempt to catch

up but could never make up for the lost decades of protection. Some new firms sprang up i.e. J&H (now One Planet), Mont and others who made products using modern materials. However, the increasingly high cost of local manufacturing forced them to move much production offshore. Local manufacture is now a small player in the plethora of equipment available to us both in our shops and from the Internet. Hopefully we will never return to tariff barriers that so inhibited our choice of gear in the past. We have all benefited from decades of advances in equipment design that have brought tough lightweight, waterproof (largely!) gear at affordable prices.

The pace of innovation in design seems to have slowed in the last two decades. The now standard internal frame nylon rucksack with hip belt was introduced in the 1970s and its basic architecture has changed little in that time. Manufacturers are now at last rediscovering the virtues of breathable mesh back panels to reduce the incidence of soaked shirt syndrome. Gortex, first introduced in the late 1970s as the answer to the need for a breathable yet waterproof fabric, has evolved and spawned a host of competing products that have benefited from three decades of refinement, though they are still far from perfect. My first generation Gortex jacket bought for US $100 in 1979 worked well for three days then its 'miracle' breathability deserted it leaving me with a jacket that worked as well as blotting paper. The current generation of lightweight non-leather and many seamed boots, whilst comfortable, seem to be a step backwards. Their longevity is not great and they appear to be far less waterproof than traditional full leather boots. It is

My first decent weatherproof tent–-a 'Trailwise'and on the right one of the first breathable nylon tunnel tents

possible that the ergonomic design of packs has gone as far as it can go, though Arne Co in NZ is refining a range of packs that include carrying some weight on the front of pack shoulder straps leading, they claim, to a more upright posture when carrying a significant load.

We have seen much progress in the quality and variety of our equipment during the last five decades. Better materials and an improved understanding of human physiology have contributed significantly to our ability to enjoy the bush without enduring sore shoulders, freezing nights in thin sleeping bags and soaked clothes.

Viva the revolution!

Barry Mayfield

Till death us do part

Bushwalking gear has changed and improved significantly over the years. For example, the old heavy A-frame canvas weekend packs are a far cry from the ultra-lightweight varieties that are available on the market now. Thermo rests have largely replaced the old foam mattresses of bygone days and small compact sleeping bags are preferred by many to the large and heavy versions for multi-day walks.

Nevertheless, we all become attached to favourite pieces of equipment, whether something modern or something 'tried and true.' Most people have a story about a pair of well worn and comfortable walking boots which they have struggled to throw away, sometimes to the point of having the boots fall apart on their feet while on the trail!

Here are just a few pieces of favourite equipment of two of the CBC's walks leaders:

Jeff Bennetts has a Paddy Pallin Bogong sleeping bag that he thinks he bought around 1979. He still uses it and it has kept him warm on many occasions in very cold conditions. He says that he doesn't have to worry about replacing it with a more modern lightweight sleeping bag because "it's lost a lot of feathers, so it's much lighter now anyway!" Jeff appears to have a thing about squeezing the last drop out of his equipment anyway. Once he was on a day walk and the bottom of his rucksack gave way. It was worn out and had literally come apart at the seams. He ended up putting it back together with safety pins and completing the walk. Jeff was also known to stitch the soles back onto a pair of volleys during a walk, using a small needle and thread from his sewing kit.

George Carter owns a sleeping mat that is 30 years old. He has always liked it as it is made of foam so never goes flat if punctured and could also be used to insulate or line his weekend pack. A group of CBC members who used to regularly join his trips noticed this really ancient looking piece of equipment and decided to buy him a thermo rest when he turned 60 years of age. George ended up giving it to his son!

Mother Woila (Jindullion)

Mother Woila is a bushwalking icon east of Cooma and is the centrepiece of the remote, steep and rugged ridge system which takes in Big Badja, Pikes Saddle, Dampier Trig, Table Top Mountain and Scout Hat in the Deua National Park. It features in the 20 epic walks listed in the CBC's 1974 publication *Bushwalking near Canberra.* On the Badja 1:25,000 map, the Woila area is a mass of close contours. Jindullion or Mother Woila appears to be surrounded by cliffs. But there are negotiable routes from Woila Creek, Dampier Trig and the razorback Scout Hat and Table Top ridge.

The Bushwalker, August 1994 had a special article on visits to Mother Woila over the period 1964–1988 written by bushwalker/historian Colin Gibson. Geoff Mosley (CBC) undertook exploratory trips to the Woila area beginning in 1962 and noted a mysterious mountain unknown to the bushwalking fraternity. On one such trip Mosley's party met Mr Broadhead of the Badja sawmill. He told them that the mountain that intrigued and tempted them was Mother Woila (pronounced 'Wily'). This was consistent with local pronunciation of Deua as 'Dewy'. The following in italics is what Colin had to say in relation to the CBC and Canberra. I have added commentary from other sources.

Of the 16 known visits to Mother Woila summit pre 1981, the following were parties from the CBC and Canberra.

1. Geoff Mosley, Geoff Marston and Noel Semple, CBC. 11-07-1964

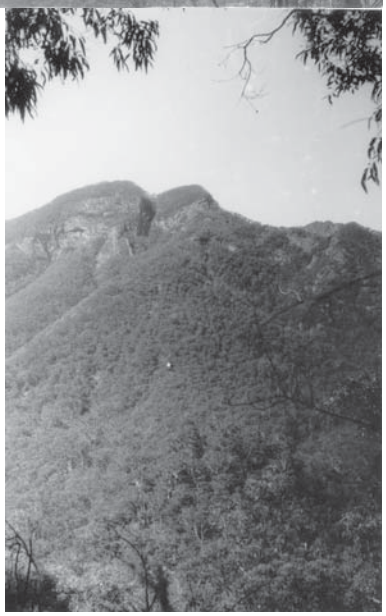
Geoff Mosley recalls his first visit to Mother Woila via Dampier through a swathe of fallen trees; finding a gully/chimney, which gave access to the peak; a late return to camp with a storm developing; a night of hurricane force winds and crashing trees; two dry camps and 40 hours without water; and a speedy exit next day! From Mother Woila his party saw two other peaks, which they called Tabletop and Scout Hat and thought about a circuit walk as a future challenge. (*Wild no 66, October–December 1997, 'Discovering Mother Woila'*).

2. Geoff Mosley, CBC 27-11-1965

3. Geoff Mosley and Karl Erett, CBC, 08-04-1966

This was the first Woila Circuit walk. The big one; and for Geoff Mosley the icing on the cake! There are several options for a circuit. One is described in the CBC's 1974 publication, *Bushwalking near Canberra.* The original circuit, chosen by Geoff Mosley and Karl Erett was Woila Creek, Little Woila, Mother Woila, Tabletop, Scout Hat, and Woila Creek.

Karl recalls "Geoff Mosley approached me with a proposition of going on a short walk. Short was meant in time and not distance. He informed me that it will be a light walk without much luggage. To make it extra light and as we are going to walk part of the distance in the dark he suggested I buy a torch that operates on a 9 volt battery rather then the usual 1.5 volt AA or C batteries. The whole trip for me was arranged in a flash. I did not know where we were going and I did not have to make any arrangements. Geoff had put in so much exploratory work and he wanted to be the first to circumnavigate Mother Woila in a 24-hour period. He also had some information that the Sydney walkers were preparing the same task. By the time we reached Snowball it was getting dark and not much further on we parked the car and walked as long as the torches held out. Every hop of a roo, a falling branch or rock was a signal for Geoff that the Sydney walkers were close by. The walk was otherwise uneventful. While I had difficulties keeping up with Geoff in the bush I was in my element when we came to the rocks. As a mountaineer and rock climber from way back I enjoyed being on the rocks again."



Mother Woila
Photos by Karl Erett

Geoff reported in the *Wild* article that they started the circuit from Woila Creek at 11.30 am (instead of 8 am as intended), climbed Little Woila and Mother Woila, camped in an overhang, and arrived back at Woila Creek at 10.25 am the following day, having traversed the razor ridges of Tabletop and Scout Hat. Twenty-three hours for the circuit! A mighty effort by any standard!

4. (Sydney group)

5. John Holtzapffel, CBC 1969

(Les Brown, leader, Alan Moy, John Holtzapffel)

John says that they had no time to go to the summit before dark and they left early the next day to get to water. They did not have time to search for any Visitors' book. Dampier had been strewn with fallen timber and

traversing this had slowed the party a lot. They had to return by the same route as they had arrived.

6. (Private Trip)

7. Dave Whiteley, CBC Easter 1973

8. Terry Jordan, CBC, July 1973

9–10. (Private Groups)

11. Bob Harrison party of three, CBC, May 1975

(The party included Gary Medaris as well as Fred George.)

Bob recalls, "The trip we did in 1975 was when I was living in Gow Street with Terry (who described the way up). We went from Badja Mill, reached the bottom (Woila Creek) mid-morning and camped at the junction on the two ridges (luckily finding water not far down the creek below).

Sunday was slow—we didn't reach Scout Hat until noon. Fred George (who had recently turned 65) declared it was impossible to get home that night, but Gary and I were determined. We reached the top of the other side just on dusk and Gary's excellent navigation got us back to Badja Mill at 9 pm using torchlight.

Bert Broadhead (who was quite a character) gave us a cup of tea and a chat, and then we all headed off back to Canberra." (The same Mr Broadhead had met Mosley at the Badja sawmill in 1962.)

Scout Hat 1994 **Photo by Eric Pickering**

12. R Story, November 1975 (National Herbarium), Canberra

13–16. (Private Groups)

In July 1981 Warwick Blayden and Ann Gibbs-Jordan placed a pocket notebook on Mother Woila, which lasted until 1988.

Ann writes, "Warwick and I ended up camping high on the side of Woila on a very steep slope of sharp rocks. We used trees as anchors and propped ourselves up against them so we didn't roll down in our sleep. It was an extremely uncomfortable night. It was impossible to pitch a fly so we were pleased that it didn't rain heavily but it did sprinkle during the night. Sunday morning we dropped down into a side creek which fell away quickly. When we got to its junction with another creek we discovered a large cairn covered in moss. It was placed on a boulder in the stream. I thought it was quite old and must have been erected by some of the exploratory parties."

There were 23 entries in the notebook indicating 23 visits over the period 1981–1988 including 12 club visits (6 by the CBC). Total visitation was 80 people in 23 parties.

The notebook contains minimal comment but includes a tentative claim of the first grandmother to climb the mountain—Pat Pickering, October 1983… .

Pat Pickering was the first grandmother to conquer Mother Woila **Photo by Eric Pickering**

The latter is a reference to our first trip to Mother Woila from Pikes Saddle and Dampier Trig in 1983. The party included Philip Gatenby, Jan Ogden, Tony Garr, Garth Abercrombie, and Eric and Pat Pickering. Like Geoff Mosley's claim to be the first party to climb Mother Woila and with Karl Erett to complete the Woila circuit in less than 24 hours, Pat's claim to be the first grandmother to summit Mother Woila has never been challenged.

Pat and I made several trips there in subsequent years. John I'ons and others have done the circuit via the more difficult exposed face of Woila from Woila Creek.

Unfortunately, in 1998, a new fire trail, of dubious fire fighting function was bulldozed south from Dampier Trig to the ridge overlooking Mother Woila, a distance of over 4 km and seriously compromising Woila's 'most elusive peak' status. Although this road was closed and is becoming overgrown, it still appears to provide a relatively quick access to the Mother Woila labyrinth. But take care when you get there, it is still a formidable challenge!

This story is based on information in *The Bushwalker August 1994*, Geoff Mosley's article in *Wild no 66 1997*, generous contributions from Karl Erett, Bob Harrison, John Holtzapffel, and Ann Gibbs-Jordan as well as our own experiences in this magnificent bushwalking paradise.

Eric Pickering

Member Profile

John I'Ons

Skiing at Blue Lake **Photo by John I'Ons**

John I'Ons arrived in Canberra from South Africa in 1978. He had been a member of the Mountain Club of South Africa, which was mainly a climbing club, with challenging trips to areas like the Drakensberg Mountains. In Canberra, John was looking for something to replace that and joined the CBC. At that stage the focus of the Club—with leaders like Fred George—was on fairly tough and adventurous weekend walks. He clearly remembers the first walk he went on: a trip to Ettrema with Peter Conroy and Linda Groom, which involved some serious rock scrambling up Gallows Gully. Trips that involved a degree of scrambling and abseiling had a lot of appeal to John: he remembered the climb up Donjon in the Budawangs, and Alan Vidler's trip to Bumberry Creek that flows into the Tuross River.

Summer trips involved light-weight gear—volleys and a tent fly for shelter. Winter trips were a different matter, with extended ski trips in the Snowy Mountains.

John's passion for rock climbing saw him organising a series of effective training events at Booroomba Rocks and Gibralter Rocks, where interested CBC members could learn the basics and try out their skill on local rock.

Member Profile

Aman Singh

Aman Singh is 30 years old and has been a member of the CBC for nearly three years. Aman joined the Club after moving to Canberra from Sydney in 2008 to take up a job in the federal public service.

"I have always had a passion for bushwalking, and the CBC offered an opportunity to pursue my hobby and to meet new friends."

Aman enjoys going on day walks, both around Canberra and in the more distant places that can be reached on gourmet weekends. He has been seen brewing and enjoying a cup of tea during breaks in pristine locations in the Snowy Mountains, Namadgi National Park and Kuring-Gai National Park near Sydney.

So far, Aman's favourite CBC bushwalking experience has been a multi-day gourmet trip to the Blue Mountains led by Edwina Yee. He likes the day walks in the Blue Mountains as the views are spectacular and the forest is dense and a lush green all the year round. Additionally: *"most trails are well marked but you can maintain a good pace and challenge yourself on some of the longer and harder walks, like the Ruined Castle."*

Aman enjoys walks with Club leaders of all ages, but it is an added bonus to have the company of one of the CBC's younger leaders from time to time, such as Edwina.

Aman likes the CBC's structured approach to organising the walks program and the walks themselves. He has learned a great deal from more experienced Club members about collecting the right equipment—food, clothing, and other gear—to support his hobby. Aman recalls once passing a woman on a long-distance walking track dressed in beach thongs and a mini-skirt, and feeling glad he had learned through the CBC how to dress and pack comfortably and sensibly for bushwalks!

Photos taken in the Blue Mountains by Edwina Yee

Why do people become CBC members?

A few memorable quotes

Peter Jones joined the CBC in 2009. He had recently retired and was bored so decided to go back to his old love of bushwalking (and back to work). His first walk was a punishing rendition of the Stockyard Spur, Mt Gingera and Mt Ginini led by John Evans. *"I don't remember going to bed, I was so tired and my feet were really sore as I did the walk in sandshoes. The next morning, I woke up and realised, hey, I like this!"*

George Carter joined in 1985. He had also joined the National Parks Association and wanted to find out if the campfire gossip was true that CBC members moved through the bush so fast that they actually could not appreciate it. On his first walk to Nursery Hill, George discovered that the leader was a nature lover and ornithologist who often stopped to look at things along the way—even on his hands and knees—and told good jokes. He decided to join the CBC.

The heart and soul of the CBC is its membership—a rich and diverse group of 323 people (152 women and 171 men) of all ages and from all walks of life. Given this diversity, it is not surprising that people join the Club for a wide variety of reasons and that different individuals seek different kinds of bushwalking experiences. As long-time member Alan Vidler put it in his speech at the 40th anniversary celebration dinner: " For some it's to get fit, or for adventure, or to see the flora and fauna, or the landform… For others, the main reasons centre around companionship or to meet people of the opposite sex."

What are some of the most common reasons for joining the CBC? Interviews and discussions with a wide cross-section of members revealed that:

- nearly all already had developed a strong interest in, or love of, nature;
- many had moved to Canberra to take up a position in the federal public service and were looking to meet people and continue their outdoor interests—some of these had previously belonged to a bushwalking or outdoor sports club in their old town or city;
- several were emerging from a broken relationship; these individuals wanted to meet new people while renewing an old hobby or seeking a new and affordable interest;
- some wanted to combine their love of the bush with physical fitness activities;
- others wanted to stretch the limits of their wilderness skills, both physically and mentally;
- still others were seeking companions to join them in activities that required developing specialist skills and were most safely done in groups, such as rock-climbing, canyoning and off-track walks to places where strong navigation skills were needed;
- a number wanted to discover new and different places to go bushwalking; and
- a few needed access to shared transport arrangements to access wilderness areas.

I woke up and realised, Hey I like this!

The range and types of activities offered by the CBC has evolved over the past 50 years, both in response to the different interests within its membership and changes in the lifestyles of the more recent generations of bushwalkers. For those seeking a more challenging and adventurous experience, the CBC program has included multi-day, off-track bushwalks deep into the wilderness—places like Mother Woila, the Wadbilliga, Ettrema and the more remote parts of the Budawangs and the Blue Mountains. For those wishing to combine a less demanding outdoor experience with social opportunities, car camps and gourmet weekends to the south coast, southern highlands and other picturesque places have proven to be a very popular option.

A wide variety of on-track and off-track day walks have always been on offer in the Canberra area that are oriented to the different preferences, fitness levels, and time constraints of members. Many of us have enjoyed pleasurable hours exploring around Tidbinbilla, Namadgi, the Brindabellas, the Tinderries and other

Overnight camping is popular **Photo by Alison Milton**

Reflections on bushwalking by a vintage member

Long-term CBC member Barbara de Bruine (nee Baxter) was well-known in the sports world of international squash. In 1964 and 1967, she competed in the test series against England. In 1968, Barb moved to Canberra to study and upgrade her teaching certificate, and joined the Canberra Bushwalking Club.

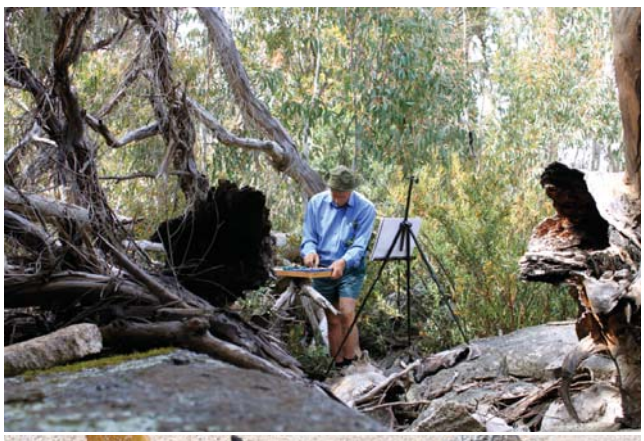
What attracted Barb to bushwalking after a life in competitive sport? Barb says it was the freedom—the sense of space—the diversity of people she met. Bushwalkers seemed more ready to share, whether it was scroggin along the track, or conversation, or just a helping hand to a walker who was struggling a bit. She felt that bushwalkers weren't as self-centred as sports players!

Barb remembers some great walking trips with the CBC to the Snowy Mountains, the Budawangs and Nadgee in the 1970s. Among her co-walkers and friends were Bob and Sybil Story, Cynthia Breheny and Sue Vidler. Barb kept bushwalking until family and teaching commitments took over her time, but she is still a member of the CBC and follows its activities with interest.

nearby spots. Some of these trips have included opportunities to recite Australian bush poetry, learn old folk songs, paint scenery, visit local historic sites or engage in conservation activities. Art, the environment and local history are also passions that numerous members enjoy.

To round it all off, the CBC has also provided opportunities to ski, canyon, rock climb, snowshoe, and canoe. Several people have first discovered these great outdoor activities, and then gone on to enthusiastically develop their skills. Unfortunately, a number of these activities died off during the early 2000s, due to the increasingly restricted policies of insurers. However, the restrictions have eased off a little in the past few years and most are experiencing a gradual revival.

Some trips cater for painters and photographers
Photos by Alison Milton



The new generation

There has been concern within the CBC in recent years that the number of younger members joining the Club—that is, people in their 20s and 30s—has been declining. This reflects a broader trend among clubs, including other bushwalking clubs, throughout Australia. The question this situation raises is: will the current membership eventually grow old and the CBC eventually cease to exist?

The good news is that the membership levels have remained fairly steady for some years now, with those who leave the CBC through natural attrition processes being replaced by new members. The overall age profile of the CBC is older than it was 20–30 years ago and, consequently, the personal circumstances and interests of the majority of those joining are different to those of people who joined up in the past at a younger age. But the love of bushwalking and outdoor activities remains a strong attraction for many new members.

Why has the number of younger people joining bushwalking (and other) clubs decreased over time? Some long-standing CBC members have observed that as general affluence and peoples' disposable income in Australia has grown, young people have more disposable income to pursue their hobbies outside of a club, with many attracted to the rising ranks of commercial providers of outdoor training and activities. A lot of younger people who are interested in outdoor activities are particularly interested in more extreme sports than the Club currently offers, such as challenging mountaineering and canyoning trips, although even some of these clubs can struggle to put on the kind of trips preferred by younger members. Modern navigational aids, lightweight gear and the quick availability of detailed information/maps on bushwalks on the Internet have also made the bush easier to access. It is now common to see private groups of friends on an extended bushwalk rather than going out with a club.

Despite these trends, the CBC still continues to attract a contingent of 'under 40s' who want to bushwalk and meet new friends like others before them. This group also represents a mix of people with varying interests. When some of these younger women and men were asked what they feel are the most appealing features of the Club and what could be improved to make it even

Perspectives on the CBC of a few younger members

One of my main reasons for joining the club was to de-stress and get away from the pressures of work and life whilst doing something that I loved. There was also the opportunity to meet new friends outside of my usual circle. I really enjoy the variety that the club offers in terms of the types of walks and outdoor activities and mingling with different age groups in a relaxed environment. The people I have met on various walks have been very interesting and great role models. The older, more experienced age group have mentored and coached some of us 'newbies' to extend ourselves and we have now progressed with confidence to more challenging walks including overnight pack walks. - **Jackie Bestek**

My reason for joining the club was to train for a big bushwalking trip to New Zealand at the end of the year, and the chance to do a broader range of walks in and around Canberra than what I could find on my own on the Internet. Since then, my goals have broadened to harder, more diverse walks, navigation skills, becoming a walk leader and even weekend pack walks (something I previously point blank refused to do!). Being from Adelaide, it's been a wonderful experience going to places I'd never even heard of, let alone thought about going to. I've also loved the '50 peaks in 50 weeks activity' this year… it's been a wonderful challenge. I've done 33 CBC walks so far in 2011 and plan to keep walking with the club for a long time to come. – **Nathan Holt, age 35.**

more appealing to the next generation of bushwalkers, they made the following observations:

- The recently modernised web site is more progressive and attractive for new, younger members as most will use a search engine to find out who is offering bushwalking activities in the ACT area; posting enticing photos and web links to short upbeat descriptions of bushwalks done by the CBC is another way to get their attention.
- The use of other modern communications and social media tools should also be considered to promote Club activities, for example: web 2.0 methods, a CBC Facebook page, attractive videos of walks for a YouTube page and having a regular blog to write about walks (i.e. like John Evans' blog).
- The person with whom you first speak when you contact a club makes a big difference to your impression of it and whether you decide to try it out. The friendliness, approachability and generally strong communication skills of the current Membership Secretary (Gary Trevean [at the time of writing]) were noted as being a good example for others who may follow. Similarly, if a young person has a good experience on their first guest walk with the Club, they are more likely to become a member.

Membership includes a range of ages
Photo by John Evans

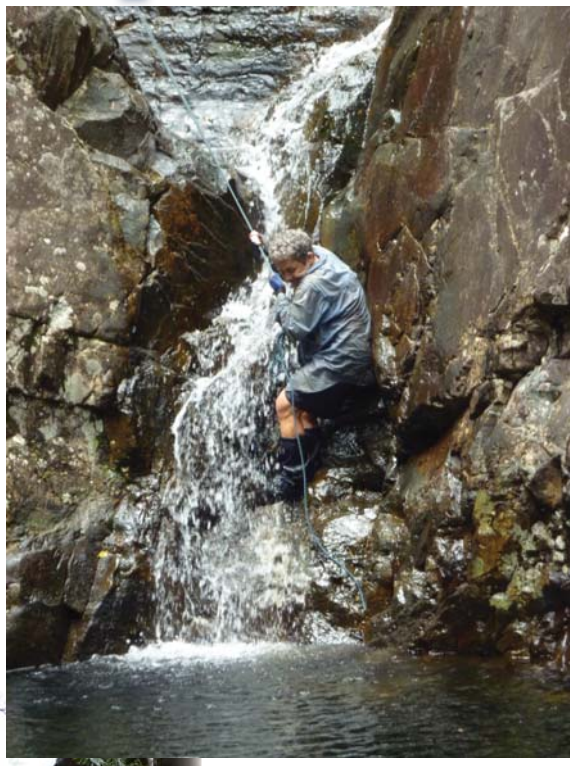
- The public service recruits a lot of graduates who want to make friends and take up hobbies to pass their leisure time as 'Canberra can get boring.' Liaison with government departments, such as participation in their orientation sessions and advertising in nearby cafes (posters, business cards) and the hobbies sections of local newspapers and web sites or publications of young professional associations could also catch the attention of new arrivals to Canberra.
- People are expected to work longer hours these days, and it is harder to find time to go walking. It means that many of us are also not as fit as we would like to be. Also, many young people have a busy social life and don't plan ahead. Having a flexible variety of half-day, full-day and even short evening walks—including the recent innovation of advertising 'last-minute' additions to the monthly program—provides more opportunities to participate in a walk.
- Attract or develop up more younger leaders. Walking with older members is a very good experience because you learn a lot of good skills and ideas about bushwalking but younger people still like to be around some people in their own age group.
- Modern Canberra society is a diverse mix of ethnicities and races. Creating an atmosphere that is welcoming of people from different backgrounds is important to increasing their representation among the CBC membership.

Additionally, one person mentioned that it would be desirable to have a greater variety of day walks that bridged the gap between easy and more challenging so that new members could gradually progress their skills and experience. It is worth noting that one highly experienced walks leader had created a great deal of rapport and respect with the participants on his day walks, such that some newer and less experienced Club members have felt comfortable with taking the next step of joining him on overnight walks.

The message from most newer members, regardless of their age, could be summarised the following way: "as long as the Club continues to modernise, adapt and diversify to a changing societal landscape, it should continue to go strong for many years into the future."

Bushwalking and the challenges of exploration

For three years I have been hearing long time members of the Club whispering about a place called Ettrema. It sounds magical and mysterious, but I can't manage to get on a trip to it. And then it happens: Keith Thomas and Rene Davies offer an 8 day trip to Ettrema over the 2010 Christmas holidays. I am both excited and nervous, because I know from previous experiences walking with them that they are driven by the thrill and challenge of exploring and navigating the type of terrain that would deter the average bushwalker.



We meet at their house to arrange transport and the first thing that strikes me upon entering the house are the rows and rows of travel books lining the walls of the front entrance. Almost every country is represented… and not just once, but by whole sections of dog-eared books. It is a classic 'explorer's' library.

On the third day of the walk, after an arduous climb up Dog Leg Creek and a terrifying crawl along a precipitous ledge in Pauls Pass, we find a small log book that goes back an unusually long length of time and yet contains very few entries. In fact, no-one has been up here for 3 years, and Keith points out he was the only one in here in all of 2004. The entries of other well known explorers can also be found, going back to the early 1990s.

After six days of hard bush bashing, rock hopping along creek beds, scrambling over huge boulders, and clambering/sliding down waterfalls, I am of the firm opinion that Ettrema is a very wild and a very beautiful place. In fact it is so beautiful I feel that more information should be made available on it so others can enjoy it.

So I ask them, *"When are you going to make a map of Ettrema as per SR Brookes Bush Maps?"*

"Oh no!" they cry and it's at this point I notice they are suddenly standing bolt upright.

"Never… some places have got to remain wilderness: people need places like Ettrema, which are a challenge."

I counter, *"but that's elitist… you can see from the log at Pauls Pass that fewer and fewer people are getting in here. There are fewer trips being organised to lead people into here, and one doesn't just acquire the necessary skill set instantaneously to work out how to get in."*

Keith looks me right in the eyes, *"There are other areas, like the Budawangs that have been mapped out, and people can hone their skills there… Ettrema will always be here… waiting for them."*

It is the last day, and we are walking along the plateau. I am relieved to have finally emerged from the gorge, when Keith turns and throws a one liner that startles me, *"So now you know how to get into it."*

With thanks
Karen Cody

Walk leaders: the backbone of the CBC

Most CBC members eagerly await the arrival of our monthly *it*. We turn quickly to the pages of the walks program, looking to see what new excursions are on offer and making plans to sign up for the ones that most appeal to us. We do not often stop to think though, about the time and effort that has gone into putting together that walks program or each of the walks themselves.

The Club's walks leaders are the people who create the beautiful *rendezvous* with nature, the peaceful break from a stressful workplace, or the challenging adventure that we are seeking. Literally hundreds of men and women over the past 50 years have dedicated considerable effort to exploring special places to walk, designing a route that will show off its best features, and organising the people and transport to get to it. Many have also freely given of their time to teach others skills like navigation, canyoning, rock-climbing, canoeing and even how to be a good walks leader. The Walks Secretary/Assistant Secretary also play their part by encuraging leaders to fill gaps in the schedule or in the variety of walks available during a given month, sometimes even doing it themselves.

The CBC currently has around 35–40 walks leaders, with about five new leaders emerging from the membership each year. We spoke with some past and present walks leaders to ask what motivates them to take on this important role in the CBC, and what they have gained from the experience.

Motivation

Unsurprisingly, all of these leaders are people who love to get out to the bush whenever they can! Most became leaders because it gave them the opportunity to choose places to go where they were interested to walk or explore. Moreover, they 'wanted to give something back to the club,' as they had enjoyed the walks of other leaders before them.

Leaders are the backbone of the club

Jeff Bennetts, who has led over 300 walks with the CBC, said that he has enjoyed the outdoors and reading maps since he was a young child, often exploring the bush at the end of his street near Middle Harbour, Sydney, with his brother. Roger Edwards also likes to read maps and discover new bushwalks:

"I've led a lot of walks in the Tinderries. I kept driving by there, and thinking that they would be pretty good walking. The Tinderries can be pretty scrubby, and getting over the rocks at the top can sometimes be tricky, but you can eat your lunch on a nice rock platform with really good views and explore lots of unnamed peaks."

Club walks leaders Lorraine Tomlins and Meg McKone both enjoy going off the beaten track and planning different and interesting routes as well:

"There's a lot of satisfaction to be had from exploring new areas where you haven't walked before, or doing a different route in a known area. I enjoy taking walkers to beautiful and spectacular places, and I find the best way to introduce people to overnight walking is to take them to a great area without scaring (or exhausting) their socks off. I recently had two new overnight women walkers on a trip to Cloudmaker and 100 Man Cave (in the Blue Mountains). They were both fit and looking for a bit of a challenge, and enjoyed staying overnight in the cave. But best of all was being able to see the route out to Cloudmaker on the skyline when they returned to Kanangra Walls, knowing that they had walked it all." – Meg McKone

For Lois Padgham: *"Leading adds another dimension to bushwalking. You are route-finding as well as keeping a sharp eye on the terrain. You also have to be aware of all your party members—where they are and if they are going ok. It is a big responsibility but very rewarding to be able to share my passion for nature and knowledge of the local flora with others."* Further to this, some promising new leaders are supported by other CBC members to take up this role. For instance, a past CBC President enthusiastically encouraged Stan Marks to become a walks leader. Stan never looked back ... he has led more walks than any other leader in the club.

Favourite places

For Roger, getting off-track to new and different places – *"everywhere from the Budawangs to the Blue Mountains"* – has been one of the highlights of his 25 years with the CBC. His favourite walk is one along the Tarlo River near Goulburn. It is a national park that has more limited access, with lots of nice small creeks and swimming spots, and there are good views from the old gaol at the eastern end.

Jeff has been a Club member since 1976; he is particularly fond of the Budawangs and the Snowy Mountains. He finds the geology and erosion patterns of the Budawangs really interesting, such as the sandstone cliffs at Folly Point. The variety of vegetation is also stunning—heath lands, rainforests—and some good multi-day circuits can be done there. Jeff enjoys the rock formations in the Snowies too and walking in areas like Mt Townsend, with its huge drop to Geehi below, Jagungal, the Ramsheads, and Lake Albina.

"The Snowies have beautiful walks in the Main Range, especially if you go off the beaten track. I remember a particularly memorable trip three years ago where the group reached Mt Kosciuszko at sunset. There was a rain shower and lightening all around and we saw a double rainbow."

George Carter joined the CBC in September 1985 and led his first walk one month later. His walks were a regular feature on the Club program for many years. George's favourite walk was one he called 'Rivers and Rainforests' and he led it many times. He liked this 3–4 day walk through the Budawangs because it featured both adventure—rock scrambles, navigational challenges, tough terrain—and spectacular scenery, such as the breathtaking rainforest in Angel Creek. George remembered one misadventure he had near the headwaters of this creek. The end part of the walk to the bottom of the creek is nearly vertical. As he carefully held on to growth coming down, a bull ant got into his shorts. He had to let go and fall into the creek. George found a way around this obstacle on later walks!

Lois makes good use of her inside knowledge as an ACT Parks employee, offering day walks in interesting places close to Canberra such as the Bullen Range, Rob Roy, Sherwood Forest and Kama Nature Reserve. She is also a Budawangs fan, but is fond of Tasmania too: *"Tassie is very hard to beat with stacks of fabulous rugged scenery. I love the Walls of Jerusalem."*

Stan, on the other hand, does not have a favourite place to walk: *"There are just too many great places."* For day walks, he likes places with good views, such as Harrisons Peak near Captains Flat and Hickory Hill and Pig Hill in the Brindabella National Park. But he also enjoys picturesque locations like Wild Cattle Creek and Wild Cattle Flat. On weekends away: *"I love them all, — the mountains of the Snowies; the Bundanoon area with its breathtaking wild flowers in spring, Little Forest Plateau and Jervis Bay with its wonderful seascapes and views of pods of whales at certain times of year. I could just go on about the many beautiful places to go!"*

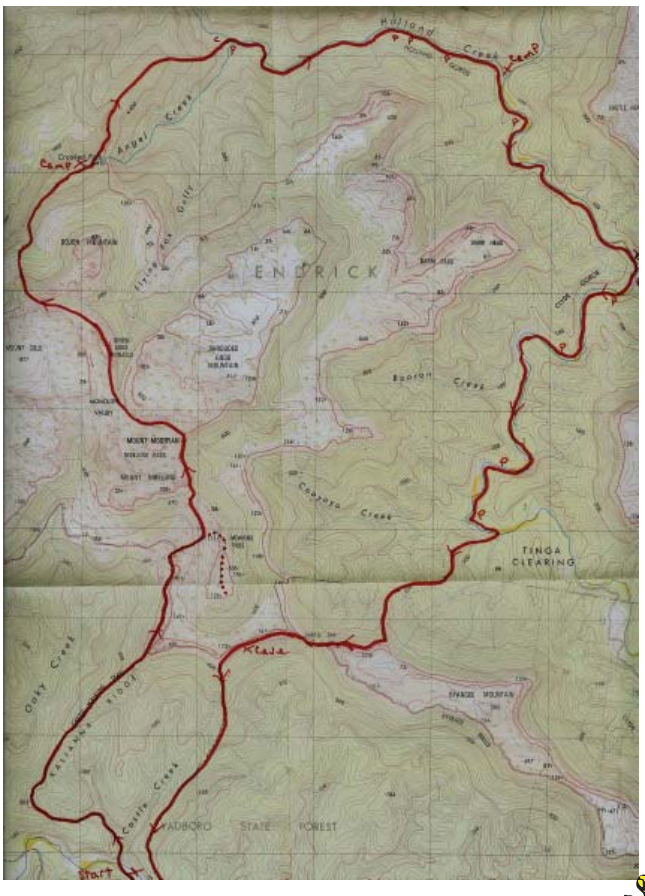
Challenges

Being a walks leader requires considerable skills, knowledge and tact. All have learned through experience how to manage groups and ensure that the participants have a safe and pleasurable walk. A few observed that it took the first few trips to get used to organising all of the participants and to making decisions, such as the delicate job of suggesting to some people that a particular walk might be unsuited to their fitness or changing the route due to the weather conditions, fatigue or illness of a member of the party.

Junction of Clyde River & Pigeon House Creek

Angel Creek campsite **Photos by George Carter**

George's Rivers and Rainforests route



Some of the things that these walks leaders have learned over the years:

Jeff recalls that Fred George, a German surveyor for the Snowy Mountains Scheme, was an excellent leader from earlier Club days who taught him certain skills. Fred had an 'economical' walking style and ensured that he kept the same pace as the others in his group, never getting too far ahead of them. He would also regularly check his map and compass bearings and show them to the party, commenting: "*I zink ve are heah*." Jeff also remembered a walk in the Tinderries during the 1970s led by one walker who had a penchant for walking very fast. The group struggled its way to the top of a peak only to be told that they had reached the wrong one! The leader had calculated the magnetic variation on his compass the wrong way round, an easily made mistake. Roger also emphasised the importance of taking regular map and compass readings, these days supplemented by a GPS bearing.

Dave Drohan, who has led Club canyoning trips and participated in many challenging multi-day walks and ski trips, learned "*to always carry extra gear in case an unforeseen event causes you to have to do an unplanned overnight stop.*" This happened to him most recently when he co-led a canyoning trip with Monika Binder in January 2011 and got caught out by a flash flood.

Flash flood: Pipeline **Photo by Monika Binder**

Dave had sufficient extra clothing and food to keep him reasonably comfortable during the night.

Dave and Jeff commented on the importance of walkers being aware of their own limits when booking for a walk or other activity and not signing up for activities "*that you are not yet ready for.*"

They, and many other leaders, have been in the position of discovering people in their party who had over-estimated their fitness or capabilities (e.g. to do rock scrambling, go through dense scrub, etc) and struggled through a walk. This can diminish the experience of the outing for others, as well as sometimes put the group at risk—for example, if it is going too slow to reach the end of a circuit in daylight.

Assessing the skills and limits of the group is a key role played by the leaders. Usually, they try to do this over the phone with newcomers or ask other leaders with whom they have walked. This is not always easy to do, without unintentionally causing offense to a person's self-image. "*But sometimes you just have to hold your ground and say sorry, you cannot come on this trip for everybody's sake.*"

Their advice to members was to be honest with themselves about their capacities and experience and just talk it over with the leader when signing up for a walk: "*Build up your skills and experience over time. Make a list of gear you need and discuss it with others. You can then really enjoy every outdoors experience and give yourself new challenges progressively.*"

George, a well known walks leader during the 1980s and 1990s, has a vivid memory of learning about something that most walks leaders have faced—how not to lose your party! He described a particular weekend walk from Folly Point through to Holland Gorge in the Budawangs, where he once lost a member of his party. A man in the group stopped to take off some clothing at a creek junction one morning, as he was feeling warm. Everyone passed him and continued onward. Later, the party noticed he was missing. Despite searching for him until 10 pm that night, which entailed a few risky climbs, the party gave up and planned to go for help the next day (this walk took place in the era before electronic aids). The walker turned up the next day—it turned out he had a map with him and had retraced his steps all the way back to Folly Point. Everyone hugged him with relief!

Serious accidents or illnesses in the bush—a particular challenge

While serious accidents and injuries do not often occur on Club bushwalks, when they do occasionally happen, they test and further develop the skills of all leaders and group members. Lorraine Tomlins recounts her experience:

"Recently I have been involved in a number of rescues— one when I was leading a CBC walk and, subsequently, in two other walks organised by another club. These rescues have meant some changes in my approach. Now I would never go anywhere in the bush without a personal locator beacon (PLB) in the party. A good basic first aid kit is indispensable and having a Senior First Aid Certificate holder participating is handy. Something bright, like an orange garbage bag to signal the rescuing helicopter, can also help. Patience is also needed, as it can take about two hours for rescuers to come.

During all of these rescues, the members of the party worked together, with many individuals taking appropriate steps in line with their own expertise. This means that, as leader, it is a case of managing the group and coordinating these individual efforts. It was also crucial that I had completed the CBC trip paperwork (contact details, route information, completed disclaimer form) and that this was readily accessible to the responsible committee members back in Canberra to be forwarded to the rescue coordination centre."

The lesson George learned that day was not to let parties split up. As this can be frustrating for faster walkers who want to go at their own pace, he found that he could let these people go ahead but arrange regular stops and rendezvous points. Some other leaders described similar experiences, learning to pace themselves so as not to get too far ahead of their groups. Others have appointed a strong and experienced fellow walker to be a 'tail end Charlie' to stay at the back of the party and ensure nobody gets accidentally left behind.

Another challenge sometimes faced by leaders has been keeping the morale up of tired group members. One smiled as he recounted a psychological trick used by a past leader, Alan Vidler. He would describe the remaining distance left to walk in 'gilometres.' A gilometre was actually 1.6 to 2 kilometres, but it somehow made people think the distance was less!

A few other reflections by the leaders concerned preparation for the walk. This included not taking good weather for granted, starting early enough to account for the hours of daylight and the possibility of a slower group, always carrying extra clothing for cold or rainy conditions, keeping first aid kits and training up-to-date and ensuring one has enough water—including a little extra in reserve.

"As a leader, it is important that we make sure everyone is well prepared with adequate water, food, clothing and first aid. Quite often I see walkers with a tiny back pack and wonder how on earth they can fit in two litres of water, raincoat, spare clothes, food, torch, first aid, etc in there. I think we also should be encouraging participants to learn how to navigate and involving them in map and compass work and route-finding." – Lois Padgham

Jeff's advice for ensuring safe, comfortable walks was: *"adjust what you do to the conditions, adapt to the circumstances. Sometimes you can let a competent group go ahead as long as you do not leave the others out of sight. Always make certain that you know where you are and be prepared to change plans if the group is going too slowly, especially on off-track walks."*

Rewards

Overall, the CBC has had very few mishaps on its trips, thanks to the competency of its leaders. All have faced moments that tested and stretched them, but all have felt highly rewarded by the pleasure they have shared with other Club members—whether reaching a beautiful place with the 'wow' effect; solving a problem; helping people learn new bush skills; or simply making new friends and sharing special moments with them. Or the funny moments, such as one leader's recollections of a trip down the Brogo River when Doug Wright creatively used a shower curtain as a fly during a rainstorm.

Former walks leader George summed up some of these experiences: *"Before I joined the CBC, my private trips often fell through. When I joined the CBC, I liked being able to walk with people with the same passion as me and as often as I wanted. You sit around the campfire together and you become like family. You talk about things you normally wouldn't. You could also solve a technical problem together, like how to get up a cliff—it's better than any team-building course. Then you share the exhilaration of getting up to the top. I still have dinner together with some of these people."*

WINTER WALKING HIGH

…mountainsides transformed to long elegant sweeps of moulded white, snowgums filigreed against a silver gully, sunset knitting streamers of gold across a dozen ridgetops, black cliffs festooned with gleaming spears, the world just a fluffy cocoon in which everything is airbrushed to soft grey curves, the rich surge of warmth as the sleeping bag encloses, a shout of joy as someone steps out to a big snow scene that shimmers under a full moon…

The discovery of an alpine world transformed by winter can be exhilarating, and many members have used the convenience provided by snowshoes to experience it. From Canberra we are fortunate to be within reach of the Australian Alps, and in recent years our snowshoes have shuffled the crests of Perisher, the Munyang valley to Schlinks Pass and slopes of Gungartan, from Dead Horse Gap to Jerusalem Hill, and from Kiandra to create a village of shadowy tents amongst the ancient snowgums around 4 Mile Hut. Some members have gone further, to include the rounded tops near Mt Bogong in Victoria, the Overland Track in Tasmania, and Arthurs Pass in New Zealand.

So roll on next winter so we can get the s'shoes crunching out the highs again!

Rupert Barnett

Antediluvian orienteering

One bright autumn Sunday in the hills south-east of Queanbeyan there was a sudden movement as the 15 competitors started on their first orienteering. They were experienced bushwalkers able to move rapidly through the tea tree scrub and over rough ground. They had many times found their way in unknown country with sketchy maps of scale 1:63,360. Now a new element was introduced: to compete in path finding. Some considered this the very thing they had waited for, others thought it blasphemous to run through beautiful bush (they stayed home this day). Yet others had the Australian attitude of trying anything once (they came back the next Club meeting wanting another event, though).

Orienteering headquarters **Photo by Geoff Mosley**

Back in 1962 the kangaroos had not yet seen many men or women run, and they set off with excited leaps when the mob moved in among the gum trees. The runners were soon spread out and found to their surprise that it is a lot harder to find a control at running speed than at normal bushwalking pace. However, more than half managed to find their way around the course and it may well be that more would have managed except for the disease than can overtake us all: fifth control lassitude. The winner was Johnny Wanless, who claimed that he did so because shortly after the start he sprained an ankle and the excruciating pain made him run very fast.

Soon we had the audacity to announce ACT Championships Day and Night Orienteering. Geoff Mosley was the day champion and David Gibson won the night event. He claims that he did so because in the dark of night there were not so many landmarks to confuse him.

The Canberra Bushwalking Club arranged several orienteering events during the 1960s. In the beginning I set the courses but later we adopted the rule that whoever was the winner had to set the next course. Thus, Karl Erett, Geoff Mosley, David Gibson and Doug Wright had the honour of taking their share of course setting. The areas used then for orienteering might surprise you. Black Mountain gave access to a good course in the pre-Caswell Drive days and the development of Tuggers makes it impossible to ever repeat the first night orienteering of the ACT. All those garden fences would provide boring obstacles, not to speak of irate house owners.

The past 50 years have seen an enormous change in the sport. Now there are several specialised orienteering clubs, whereas we were doing orienteering as an exciting change on the bushwalking program. The maps used today use a considerably larger scale than 1:63,360 and give 5 metres contours rather than 50 feet. More accurate, but surely less scope for adventures.

Gösta Lyngå

GOD'S BUILDING BLOCKS

Boulders stacked, jumbled, scattered,
God's building blocks perched precariously
High above the valley.

Bushes tangled, reaching high
Endeavouring to touch the sky
A jungle's growth encroaching.

Tramping narrow indiscernible tracks
Searching for nature's gifts to refract
Blossomed and enchanting.

Careful brushstrokes deftly applied
To paper; canvas; naturally inspired
To capture nature's beauty.

Pondering, musing words to describe
Mix of rock and tender foliage
Legoland's great wonders.

Alison Milton

PHOTOGRAPHY WALK TO LEGOLAND NOVEMBER 2010

Member Profile

Rob and Jenny Horsfield

Both Jenny and Rob joined CBC in the early 1990s. While they'd always been active walkers and had usually done their own thing, it was time to extend: new people and places had appeal. It worked out well.

They reflect: "Over the time various walks come to mind. Mts Burbidge, Kelly and Scabby provide both demand and spectacle of which we never tire. Gourmet meals on top of the Castle are a delight. Mother Woila and Jillacamba should be on anyone's 'must do' list. We seem to periodically return to Cloudmaker and the Kowmung River in the Blue Mountains. And the Snowys are special too. Of the various long-distance trips, the Australian Alps Walking Track is our favourite. One could go on… "

"And of course there has been the camaraderie and the fun. Some one-liners provide special memories of different trips and walkers:"

Up to his armpits in Hut Creek, near O'Keefes, camera and all.

In the dark he levitated, horizontally one metre off the ground and howled in horror, but it was a leech, not the snake he imagined, that slithered over his top lip.

After a quick one off the wrist he was walking around in the snow and dark in his undies, trying to find his tent

They called him the 'Snake Whisperer'; there was an encounter on almost every trip.

'A five-ounce nip of 'ground softener' is the thing for a night like this'.

She enjoys a reasonable fire: pyromaniacs are like that.

Wet, heavy pack, going up hill, miserable… 'the leader needs to know I'm not enjoying this'.

He pointed south and asked if it was north. Half an hour later we'd lost him.

We were in the middle of the High Country. She wasn't interested so he was going home.

High wind, heavy rain, wet, freezing… who said discomfort is only a state of mind?

"CBC has been good to us: an active walking club, interesting venues and an engaging, friendly membership."

The Trip that didn't

We only lasted just less than a week
The weather was cold and foul
The snow was thick on both bush and peak
And the wind never ceased to howl.

The rivers were up, crossings in doubt
Some gear was wet or broken
We re-made our plans for a best way out
The wrath of nature it seemed had spoken.

T'was a long way down to the homestead hut
On trail of snow then open plain
Where the wind's chill gusts cruelly cut
And each 'k' was a valued gain.

Some birds we saw hurtling through air
And two brumbies with foal in the snow
We neared with camera and judicious care
As the two took their young in tow.

And wasn't that hut a wonderful place
Its respite, shelter and fire.
We cooked, ate and dried depending on case
And passed another day there to be drier.

So we headed home, some fit and some lame
The only thing to be done.
All avowed that they were glad they came.
Wasn't it simply just fun?

Rob Horsfield.
KNP September 2009

Renaissance following the 2003 bushfire

Aboriginal people have lived in the Canberra region for at least 21,000 years. They used fire to regenerate grass in open areas to attract kangaroos and to maintain visibility and access through forest areas.

Pastoralists who arrived in the 19th Century burnt the forest frequently, and always in summer, to keep the woodland visually open and accessible, to provide fresh palatable and nutrient rich growth and to reduce the risk of huge bushfires. Stock routes through the forest leading to the snow country were burnt every autumn as the last mobs of sheep and cattle were brought down from their high summer pastures. This policy was designed to prevent any stock from returning to the high summer pastures and being caught in early snow.

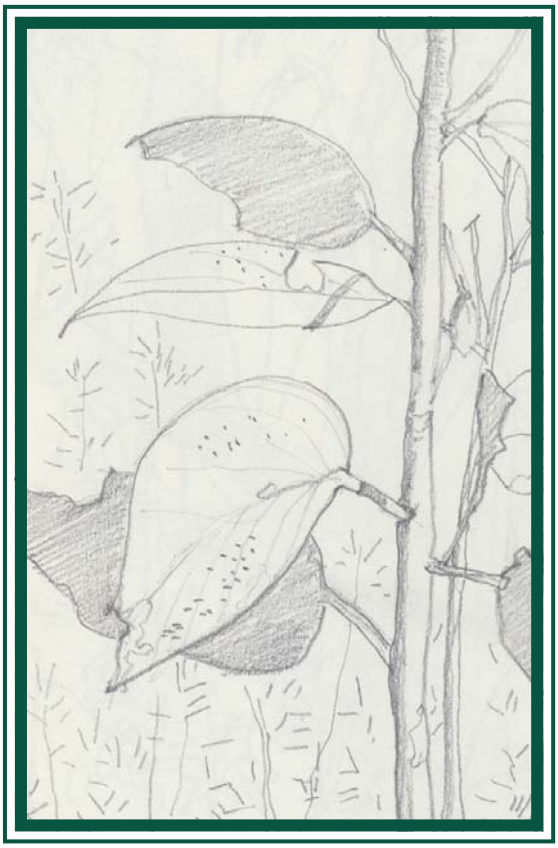
When, in 1979, almost half of the Australian Capital Territory was preserved as the Namadgi National Park, most domesticated animals were removed and the vegetation began to resume its natural density and range of species. Off-track walks through the bush were popular. As drought took hold early in the 21st Century, the national park was sometimes closed to use due to extreme fire danger.

In January 2003, fire exploded into the territory: over a period of two weeks 90% of the national park in the ACT was burnt, leaving only its southern tip and a few small pockets of green. Large areas of the national park were closed for many weeks due to the danger of burnt trees falling.

When walking resumed, we found ourselves knee deep in ash and walking through forests of burnt trees and clinking across shards of rock that had exfoliated from granite boulders. With the canopy open, wild flowers flourished in soil recently fertilised by copious quantities of ash.

The years following the bush fire were excruciatingly dry, giving seeds, epicormic growth and eucalypts' emergency new foliage, a difficult time to survive. Bushwalkers were able to walk freely to wonderful places that had not been so easily accessed for decades. New growth emerged from the blackness: grass trees came to life; growth sprouted from the base of eucalypts, flowers flourished and closely spaced tree saplings and shrubs appeared. We were delighted to watch nature recovering from such a burn out.

Sapling Mt Ginnini **Cynthia Breheny**



Encouraged by the unusually high rainfall of 2010, growth is now so dense in much of Namadgi National Park that in places, it is difficult to penetrate. We watch with interest the balance of nature and its effect on bushwalking in the ACT.

Cynthia Breheny

Rain

It rained and rained and rained and rained
The average fall was well maintained
And when the tracks were simply bogs
It started raining cats and dogs.

After a drought of half and hour
We had a most refreshing shower
And then most curious of all
A steady rain began to fall.

Next day was also fairly dry
Save a deluge from the sky
Which wet the party to the skin
And then a gentle rain set in.

Anon found in a hut in New Zealand

Alone at Lake Mountain

Remember Lake Mountain in Victoria where some of us in these parts used to go sledging and cross country skiing, what seems like many years ago? After the February 2009 fires it is very much changed.

I made my return there on the following New Year's Eve. After a scary drive over the Black Spur with many speeding drivers, I reached the devastated town of Marysville. Some buildings, including the Bakery café, had survived and a large new supermarket had only recently opened, but there were huge gaps.

All of the forest around Marysville and way into the distance was burnt and I approached Lake Mountain with trepidation. Sure enough, apart from a section of rainforest on the right-hand side of the road after the turnoff, all of the trees and the ground had been burned as though they had been blasted by a giant burner. I first became aware of this when, travelling up the hill towards the resort, I saw what looked at first sight to be patches of snow. I soon realised that these were in fact granite boulders exposed by the removal of all undergrowth and quite a bit of soil.

These boulders, previously largely hidden, are now a major feature of the surface throughout Lake Mountain. The other prominent feature is the condition of the snow gums, the curved brown trunks, which are still minus all their leaves. Dangling from them are long pieces of bark, which in places reach the ground. This scenery is not going to last for too long because there is regrowth emerging at the bottom of each tree as well as snow gum seedlings emerging from the blackened soil.

Snowgums before the fire

I found the large new resort building completely deserted as was the temporary public shelter. In this unfamiliar landscape I walked northwards along the Lake Mountain ski trail network heading for the highest point of 1,490 metres. When I reached the turnoff to the Hut Trail at the end of Panorama Trail, I was confronted by a sign saying that the Hut Trail was 'Closed until further notice'. I think the reason for this was that the work of replacing the snow poles had not yet reached this point. I pressed on but the tracks were indistinct and although I think I did reach the highest point I could not be sure because I could not find the remains of an old hut that is supposed to be nearby.

I kept a close eye on the compass in this country but strangely it was when I got back to the trails that I had the most difficulty since it took me about half an hour to find my dumped pack.

When I finally found it I set up my tent in the middle of the track fairly confident, but not entirely, that no vehicle would come along and squash me. Actually, I had a sensation of complete aloneness (how often have you experienced that?), with the exception that I was a source of attraction for thousands of flies (unfortunately my Aeroguard had run out!). A bit of a wind then got up and when I got into my tent at dark fall they disappeared. Unfortunately, they were replaced by mosquitoes. Sleeping proved difficult until I worked out how to pull my outer bag completely over my head until only my nose and mouth were exposed to these new insects.

Then about 10.30 pm the heavens put on a superb New Year's Eve sound, light and air show. If I remember the sequence right, first came the wind and huge claps of thunder accompanied by brilliant flashes of lightning, some very close. This was followed by very heavy rain. Fortunately, my old orange tent was well up to the task.

After the rain, with there still being quite a bit of wind around, I heard a most curious sound. It was a series of short very loud clapping noises lasting about two seconds and repeated at intervals of about five minutes. They sounded so human in origin that I could not help thinking someone was out there trying to scare me. I still do not know exactly how this sound was made but I believe it was the wind impacting on the bark hanging down from the trees where two or three pieces were dangling close together—something I have never heard before. Very scary!

Next morning I visited the Panorama Lookout but a dense mist obscured the distant mountains, which were supposed to be visible from this point, including the recently visited Bluff. I then headed back to the resort, which was still completely deserted. In my whole visit to Lake Mountain I did not see any other person.

I have done quite a bit of solo walking but it is the night time where one feels most alone on such trips even when the weather decides to let you know it is there with you.

Geoff Mosley

Yet another tall tale from THOSE Tuesday walks

By Kaz

On returning from my first end to end walk of the Australian Alpine Walking Track (AAWT), I was told that I should be doing Tuesday walks. I viewed the idea with great unease, as other Club members had previously cautioned me to stay away from THOSE walks as they pushed most walkers past their limits. I heard stories of John Evans' tremendous speed on fire trails and of his mate Max Smith, who flew down steep slopes covered in impenetrable scrub. In contrast, I was a 50-year-old female public servant with a grand total of four months of bushwalking experience. I wasn't a fitness fanatic, I wasn't a cyclist, I wasn't even a bloody runner!

Nevertheless, buoyed by my resolution to retain my new level of fitness (afterall, even my daughter had told me I looked 'buff'), I sent an enquiry email off to John. I was welcomed enthusiastically and invited to climb a creek line in search of some tree ferns that he said 'were documented in a Heritage List of Significant Sites.' It sounded intriguing, indeed, I almost felt like finding those tree ferns would be a service to society. Needless to say, the creek line turned out to be a blackberry infested gully of perilously loose rocks, without a tree fern in sight.

It was a portent of things to come… each Tuesday became another session of bush-bashing, rock-scrambling, peak-bagging, cave-crawling, creek-sliding and then finally (mercifully) stopping… to scratch through the undergrowth for yet another long lost object of 'insignificance'.

During the walks I began to appreciate the brotherhood between John and Max. It is a rarity to find a dependable walking partner with the same bushwalking interests, and these two had found each other. To top it off, Max was all too happy to indulge John's latest obsession to 'tick a list', as long as it got them into new bushwalking territory. It was not unusual to see Max, with an impish grin, shaking his head at John's obvious glee on finding a half metre long line of rocks laid end to end. (I'm sure by now you have heard about John and his obsession for ACT border markers—however, to put things in perspective—you also need to know that there are over 2,000 of these markers on this latest list!)

Tuesday walks are multi-denominational in nature and have attracted a veritable who's who of bushwalking legends, who, John and Max recognise as their mentors. There were guest leaders from the CBC, FBI, and NPA, to list just a few of the clubs. Looking back, I cannot believe some of the walks we went on, and of course, it's all there, complete with photos, maps, route cards and my whinging, neatly catalogued in John's biggest list… his web site. Here is my pick of the 'worst' walks, annotated with John's comments from his web site:

Ascents: The Shoalhaven, Paddys Castle, 27 April 2010 Guest Leader: Brian Surin—I looked up out of the gorge and couldn't believe it was proposed to get out that way, I had never seen such a combination of enormous scree slopes and continuous rock faces. It took an hour and a half to ascend 300 m and to move 700 m horizontally. For every metre we climbed of scree we slid back a half metre. When we finally reached Paddys Castle, John reported that Brian *"was extra happy, as he could not recall another CBC party taking the direct ascent in 15 years of Club membership."*

Scree slopes from Paddys Castle **Photo by Karen Cody**

Terrain: Namadgi, Rock Flats, 13 June 2009—as John described it *"Thick regrowth as we contoured around at about 1,420 m then, as the slope ran down towards the W-E arm of Rendezvous Creek, the most horrendous pick-up-sticks of burnt, fallen Mountain Ash saplings. Only worse than previous occasions, as this time they were covered with snow on the South-facing slope. We slowed to a crawl, covering 300 m in 30 minutes. At one place we were walking along snow-covered saplings 2 m up in the air, using live, growing trees as handholds to balance ourselves."*

Pick-up sticks SE of Square Rock
Photo by Karen Cody

Distance: Bushfold Flats and Rock Face above Blue Gum Creek, 9 September 2008—Max predicted it to be "*about 50/50 track and off track—say medium to hard. Distance about 12–15 km with 700 m or so climb.*" Well we would have been at least 8 hours into the walk when it dawned on us that we seemed to be a bit more exhausted than anticipated. On questioning Max, we worked out that all this time his estimated trip distances and climbs were based on the premise that the portion of the track that leads up to the actual walk should not be included. It was just an 'inconvenience' that Mt Tennant sat between where we had parked the cars and where the actual walk began! As John put it: "*We now know the secret of Max's meanders—he doesn't count the ups and ups in between the start and objective! Actual distance: 20.9 km, climb: 1,400 m.*"

Weather: Stockyard Spur and Mt Gingera, 3 June 2008—The weather forecast was appalling, but instead of cancelling, it was seen as a great opportunity to test out our new wet weather gear… as expected it pissed down!

A lovely day on Mt Gingera **Photo by John Evans**

The web site also contains frequent references to John's fear of water, fear of heights, fear of blood and I suspect… fear of the dark. These are not fanciful tales, just ask those who have seen John do a bushwalk along a shallow creek line wearing a life jacket for the whole day!

John – rough water creek walking **Photo by Madeleine Huckstepp**

Alas, three and a half years of long distance walking, cross-country skiing in gale force winds and sleeping on the snow in frost lined tents, has made me soft, and I'm not sure that I can keep up with the guys anymore. At least I have the photographs… screen shots of points of terror, frustration, collapse and awe… frozen in time.

I have been most fortunate to have been dragged through some of the worst country and fiercest conditions on THOSE Tuesday walks. I know I speak for a number of walkers when I say that we can't thank the guys enough for the bushwalking skills and fitness that we have acquired through their trips. But then a Tuesday walk is not about conquering nature and physical feats of daring, rather it's about having a chat, capturing some tremendous views and ever so subtly finding yourself.

It's said that "*A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader; a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves.*" Don't miss your chance to set your own course, Tuesday walks are not all blackberries and cliff faces… well… almost.

Hospital Creek Hut: **Cynthia Breheny**

A brief history of joint FBI/CBC/NPA Wednesday walks

I took early retirement from the work force in 1989 and decided that as a keen bushwalker challenging mid-week walks would be a good idea to meet the social and physical needs of people like myself. People were taking up offers of early retirement from age 50+, and others were taking midweek 'flex' leave. I decided on Wednesdays because it is halfway between the weekend programs, which we all enjoy and because I played tennis on Tuesdays and Thursdays (and still do). Wednesday Walks needed to be challenging, but not gut-busting for those who had to go back to work the next day. They would equate to the CBC's medium/medium–rough categories—i.e. medium distance, preferably off-track, and with decent climbs.

Nursery Swamp **Photo by Janet Edstein**

The first Wednesday walk of this type was an FBI walk I led on 1 November 1989. I am sure there were some ad hoc walks (off program) as well as others where I just invited people to come awalking. I led a few programmed Wednesday Walks in 1990 and 1991 for the CBC and in 1992 for the FBI. The walk on 22 August 1990 was significant because Allan Mikkelsen took a flex day to attend. There were only three of us and I organised a 'car shuffle' using a bicycle as the second car. When Allan retired some years later, he played a very significant role in the further development of Wednesday Walks. Here is a quote from Allan's write-up of the walk published in the Canberra Bushwalking Club's monthly *it* magazine (September 1990).

"We then descended to the valley floor; saw a wild pig and countless kangaroos before crossing the Orroral River and returning to the car park. The rain, sleet and snow were heavy enough for us all to resort to donning our wet weather gear. It was hard to put the thought 'the cars are just over this rise' out of our heads and replace it with 'the bicycle is just over the rise'. Eventually we reached the hidden bicycle and Eric cycled off with the wind behind him to retrieve the car while Pat and I sauntered along the road. The use of the bicycle was a great success and I can recommend it to anyone faced with a similar car shuffle problem. Despite the weather I had a great day and hope to have a flex or sickie on the next Wednesday the Pickerings venture out. Thanks Eric and Pat for an interesting day."

To provide historical context, Bill Hayden was Governor-General, Bob Hawke and Margaret Thatcher Prime Ministers, George Bush (senior) was US President, Trevor Kaine was ACT Chief Minister, Terence Uren was President of CBC, Ray Franzi was President of FBI and Syd Comfort was President of the NPA (ACT).

My objective was to have one walk per month. By 1992/1993 Wednesday Walks were a regular part of the FBI program. I was leading all the walks. I tried to encourage other leaders, and I pay tribute to those who joined in as leaders over the initial years. It was about this time I adopted the wording 'Mid-week walks will have common features—interesting, not difficult but you will feel exercised, close to Canberra.' In other words, people could attend walks and not need another day off work to recover. This wording is still used in the FBI program.

Then in 1997 Allan Mikkelsen added to the program by leading joint FBI/CBC walks on the second Wednesday each month. There were then walks on two Wednesdays a month.

The NPA, which had had its own program of shorter walks and nature rambles over the period 1983–1995, introduced a new series of walks in October 1996, the first led by Col McAlister. These later became part of the joint Wednesday medium walks program and with the FBI doubling up there were walks on every Wednesday of the month. It was good to see the three clubs cooperating in this way.

Lunch with great views **Photo by Janet Edstein**

Wednesday walks provide plenty of adventure with spectacular views **Photos by Jan and Philip Gatenby**

To complete the mid-week picture, in 2001, the FBI commenced a completely separate program of Wednesday shorter walks, which still attract considerable support for people seeking gentle exercise and companionship.

In 2004, Allan Mikkelsen introduced the email system of informing Wednesday Walkers of the walk location and meeting times, which has made things much easier for both leaders and walkers. For a while, the large numbers attending these walks became a problem but numbers have now settled down to a reasonable level.

Allan led joint CBC/FBI Wednesday Walks for more than a decade until 2010. Janet Edstein became CBC Wednesday Walks coordinator after brief stints in the job by CBC Walks secretaries, Jeff Bennetts and Rob Horsfield. Allan who has been a good friend of mine for many years (we have walked together in the Himalayas, the Kimberly and locally) did a sterling job for Wednesday Walkers and the CBC in leading so many Wednesday Walks over a very long period of time.

It is good to see the enormous support for Wednesday Walks from both walkers and leaders, many of whom belong to all three clubs.

Joint FBI/CBC/NPA Wednesday Walks and Wednesday Walkers have become an important part of the bushwalking program, and have done much to encourage friendship, cooperation and understanding between the three clubs.

Eric Pickering

Food, glorious food

Food is always a major consideration on bushwalks, particularly for overnight or multi-day pack walks. Food and water can contribute to a major part of pack weight. Obviously, on day walks you can afford to include a few extra grams to pack a tasty lunch, with perhaps a treat of cake or sweets. For pack walks and in particular, long distance walks, every gram counts. Some tricks to reduce the load include sending provisions (food and water) on ahead to be cached at convenient locations, or packing dehydrated food and relying on streams or ground water wherever possible. Early bushwalkers perhaps did not have these same advantages as walkers 50 years on. The availability of dehydrated food has vastly improved. Some keen walkers now dehydrate their own food and carefully measure and weigh every gram. However, they need to ensure that they consume enough kilojoules each day to give them the energy they need to complete the next day's journey.

Nevertheless, with a little imagination, it is possible to prepare quite delicious meals. For example, using beef jerky is a great way of including a tasty meat flavour.

The following is just one recipe adapted for bushwalking by Keith Thomas. Serves 2.

Biriani rice

1 cup rice
1 small packet Surprise peas and/or carrots
onion
sultanas
almonds
pepperoni
1 tsp garam masala
3 to 4 cardamom pods
6 cloves
1 cinnamon stick
1 stock cube
saffron
coriander
cumin
whole black peppercorns

Soak peas. Fry onion, almonds, garlic and set aside. Fry rice in saffron and ghee with spices. Add 2 cups water with peas and stock cubes and boil until rice is cooked. Add almonds, sultanas and pepperoni.

The beauty and magic of canyoning

Canyoning is an exciting sport that can take you to some of the most remote, hidden and breathtaking places in the wilderness. Canyoning can also be a very physically and mentally demanding sport. It combines bushwalking with the skills of abseiling down cliffs or waterfalls, rock-hopping or swimming down slippery waterways, and climbing/scrambling over rocks on the way back up and out of the canyon being visited. But the rewards for this effort are great: you gain access to some of nature's most delicate and exquisite scenery, in locations that cannot be reached on foot alone, and a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment at the end of the trip.

The CBC's history of canyoning extends back to the earliest days of the Club, with many of its pioneering members lured by the promise of these magical places. These members passed along their skills to newly joining members, people such as Keith Thomas, Peter Conroy, Linda Groom, Ian Hickson, Nic Bendeli, Doug Floyd and Kent Holman. One former CBC member, Dave Drohan, was a qualified canyoning instructor and even provided free courses during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Many trips have taken place over the years in areas such as the Blue Mountains and Bungonia Gorge to canyons with intriguing names like Bigfoot, Heart Attack, Hartleys Mistake, Clatterteeth, Four Dopes, Bjelkes Mind and Deep Throat. Dave recalls some spectacular trips to places around Newnes Plateau, Mt Wilson and the northern Wollemi. One of his personal favourites is the challenging seven abseiling drops of Kanangra Falls, with magnificent views both in and around the falls and very special wilderness walking through the gorge at the bottom.

Like his fellow canyoners, Dave's long-standing passion for the sport has been inspired by the incredible scenery that he could reach inside the canyons—giant green ferns, rushing waterfalls, cool cascades, the varieties and textures of rock both going down and up.

"On a hot day, it is like you are in a totally different world down there. And the way the light changes and strikes the different features is incredibly beautiful."

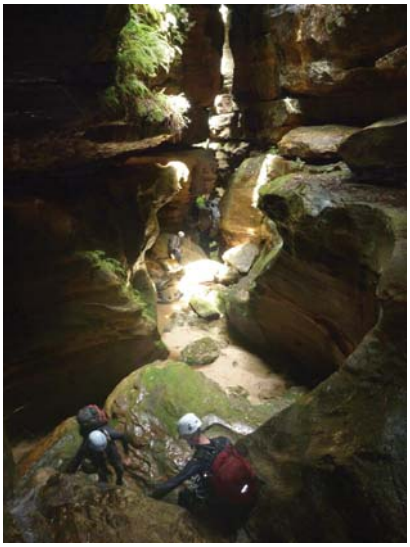
Dave especially likes the technical challenges of canyoning. He became a member of the NSW Confederation's Bushwalkers Search and Rescue Unit in 1982 (later renamed the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad), where he could combine his mechanical aptitude, enjoyment of teaching and love of the outdoors to develop new techniques for rescuing people out of difficult situations.

One of Dave's students and a fellow search and rescue rock squad member is Monika Binder. Monika, is an active CBC member with a deep love of canyoning and 'the mystical and magical places it takes you through.' In January 2011, with Dave as co-leader, Monika led the Club's first canyoning trip in over six years.

Club insurance issues had seen the decline of canyoning and the departure of some of its experienced canyoners after 2003–04. The insurance issues recently eased up somewhat, opening the door to once again include this terrific sport on the program. The trip, to the Nightmare and Pipeline Canyons, turned into a real adventure after a flash flood unexpectedly hit the group in Pipeline Canyon. Their skills and experience ensured a positive outcome.

There is interest among some CBC members in a further revival of the Club's canyoning activities in future. This will take some effort to organise, as a foundation of appropriately skilled individuals will need to be rebuilt. But, like canyoning itself, it is a worthy challenge with great rewards. So watch this space!

Photos: Dave Drohan



The Pipeline **Photo: Monika Binder**

Conservation activities

While the Club's primary focus is on bushwalking it has always had a strong commitment to conservation. This is evidenced by the position of Conservation Officer as part of the committee structure.

Over the years the Club has contributed funds to conservation projects, lobbied, participated in numerous forums and contributed to the development of policy relating to the formation and ongoing management of national parks.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the National Parks Association and the Canberra Bushwalking Club lobbied for the creation of a local national park in southern ACT. In 1975, the CBC Conservation officer, Dan Buchler, wrote to John Haslem, whom he had known through work contacts. After a meeting between CBC members Alan Vidler and Dan, and politicians John Haslem, and John Knight it was agreed to take a weekend trip to Mt Kelly. The eventual group consisted of John and Carla Knight; John Haslem; Alan and Sue Vidler; Russ and Jenny Bauer; Dan Buchler; Gary Medaris; Wendy Davidson; Harry Black; Greg Scott; Fred George; Bob Harrison; Rene Lays and Reet Vallak.

A fuller account of this trip is included in the CBC 40th anniversary book, however, it is considered that this trip ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Namadgi National Park.

Other key achievements include:–

- the cessation of camping in Monolith Valley within the Morton National Park;
- donation of Club funds coupled with receipt of a Heritage Commission Grant for Club members to undertake track stabilisation and conservation work in Monolith Valley during 1990;
- remedial track work in various national parks; and
- a comprehensive assessment of the ACT section of the Australian Alps Walking Track following the March 2004 fires.

Surveying the Alps Track **Photographer unknown**

Invasive Broom Removal – Namadgi National Park

In 1993 the Club decided to undertake a long-term conservation project in Namadgi National Park. It was seen as a way of giving something back to the area that has provided so much enjoyment to Club members over many years.

After meeting with park managers it was agreed that removal of the invasive broom species would be a suitable project. An area along the Cotter River in the vicinity of Cotter Hut was identified as needing intensive control measures as it was badly infested with thousands of very large mature plants. At the commencement of the project the Club was told that as the seeds of the plants could lay dormant in the soil for in excess of 20 years, it would take considerable dedication and determination to bring it under control. Evidence to date has proven that statement to be very true.

Initially, work involved removing small seedlings through to large 'tree-like' plants. Site identification, mapping and preparation of detailed status reports was also undertaken. In subsequent years, depending on weather conditions, plants continued to germinate and grow rapidly. In a typical year at least 1,000 plants have been detected and removed.

After the 2003 fires there was an explosion of growth and plants appeared in numbers similar to those found at the commencement of the project. It was a rather depressing experience but with grim determination, work continued to bring things back under control again. Without ongoing control, plants could easily again expand to plague proportions, so at this stage there is no end in sight to the project. We await anxiously for the development of a suitable permanent solution to the control of this very invasive species.

Over the years, numerous Club members have been involved in the providing thousands of hours of voluntary work on this important project.

This year, 2011, will be the 19th year of the project.

John Thwaite
Broom Project Coordinator

Regrowth after the 2003 fires **Photographer unknown**

Lost and found

In over 40 years with the CBC I have been involved in, and heard of, many incidents ranging from amusing to tragic. I selected those I am about to relate because I was *not* involved directly, so the facts remain deniable!

An evening in Paradise

A leader programmed a weekend trip to the Tinderries. The participants included several of the Club's most competent walkers.

On Sunday afternoon a member whose strengths did **not** include navigation or bushcraft wandered away from the main party to take some photos from a nearby high point. He left his pack in the ferocious scrub in the saddle below. When he returned he could not find his pack again—or the rest of the party. It was getting late, the weather was very threatening, and he could see the cars at the farm below. He said *"bugger it,"* went down to the farm, and rang the leader's wife to let her know the situation.

In the meantime, the rest of the party went looking for him. They found the pack, but no sign of him. They did not want to leave his pack as it would be hard to find again, but did not want to take it either, as he could be left up there alone without gear. Consequently, they all spent a wet miserable night in a horrible campsite near the pack, with no food, while he dined on steak and slept in a bed at the farm. He survived when they came out next day to get help to look for him!

By the way, in case anyone thinks this bloke was a liability, he was somebody who would always stay out overnight with a sick or injured person, go back down the mountain to help someone, or carry lots of extra gear if someone was struggling for some reason.

The newcomer and the expert

On another occasion in the 1970s, a keen but inexperienced leader took a trip up McKeahnie Trig from Kangaroo Creek. At the summit, one of the Club's highly experienced members told the leader that he would like to do a side trip on his own to Mt McKeahnie proper. The leader did not feel confident enough to refuse 'the expert,' but warned him that all vehicle drivers had reasons they could not wait—so if he wasn't back in time, too bad. A keen newcomer decided he would like to go on the side trip as well.

The pair ran out of time, or steam, or both, on the way. They decided to exit via the Smokers Gap–Orroral fire trail. The expert went ahead to try and catch the main party. After he got to Smokers Gap he ran down the road to Kangaroo Creek, but the others had left so he set off back to Smoker's Gap.

The newcomer got to the road after dark and waited. He had no real idea just how far it was to Kangaroo Creek, and eventually decided the other bloke had got lost back among the fire trails so started walking down the road back to civilization. Some time later the expert arrived back, decided the newcomer must have been even slower than expected and waited, then eventually headed off to get help as the newcomer obviously had become lost.

Much later, the newcomer reached a farm and, acting on advice picked up during the walk, rang the ranger then living at Corin Dam. Being late on Sunday and the ranger's day off, he was, in a word, drunk. He told the guy to ring the police, which he did. The police sent out a car to pick him up and help find the lost bushwalker. In the meantime, the expert reached another farm and rang the **same** ranger. In his state, the ranger did not connect the call with the one he had received 20 minutes earlier, but this time decided he'd better do something. The ranger arranged to pick up the expert and help find the lost bushwalker.

The police got in contact with the ranger by radio to get access through locked gates, and both the police and the ranger subsequently spent considerable time driving around various tracks looking for the lost bushwalker—all the time in radio contact with each other, while searching for the person sitting in the other vehicle. I think we can skip the embarrassment all suffered when they realised the situation!

While it is easy to talk about such rare incidents, in the long-run, the more memorable times are the numerous relatively uneventful trips spent enjoying the scenery and sitting around campfires chatting with friends. I look forward to more such evenings in the years ahead.

Alan Vidler

The Long Distance Walker

From Buckwong Creek to the Budawangs
I've carried heavy loads
Down lonely isolated tracks and dusty, rocky roads
With eight day's food and water too it's quite a load to bear
But that's the price one has to pay, if one wants to get to 'there'.

And 'there' is a somewhat rubbery place, it could be anywhere
From a snow-capped peak in wintertime to a hut no longer there.
There are so many more great places to which I want to go
And I'll see as many as I can—before I get too slow.

Mike Baker

Three tales of kayaking

Mike Bremers

Back in the 1990s Chris Bellamy organised a canoeing program with trips led by interested canoeists. Some of these trips were advertised on the CBC program and some were advertised with the National Parks Association program. I started paddling a kayak in 1994 and over the following years I was part of many canoeing trips.

One memorable CBC trip in January 1996 was led by John Kyatt on the lower Snowy River down to Marlo. As a relatively inexperienced paddler I was keen to learn tips from the more experienced paddlers. Our leader told us that he had the perfect canoeing attire. We were all keen to find out what it was. Before launching it was necessary to do a car shuffle to Marlo and by this stage our leader was dressed in his canoeing clothes—long sleeved cotton pyjamas. His theory was that these were ideal clothes for canoeing because they were cool, quick drying, gave protection from the sun and as an added bonus he did not need to change when he went to bed. At Marlo he received bemused looks from people in their beachwear wondering why this person was wearing his pyjamas in the middle of a warm summer day.

John declared pyjamas were the best attire

Another very memorable trip was led by Chris Bellamy on the Murray River from Yarrawonga in September 1998. Whilst the weather was perfect, it happened to coincide with the river being in flood. The second and third days were particularly memorable. On the second day we paddled 60 km to Tocumwal. Unfortunately we overshot the caravan park by a kilometre before realising our mistake. It was a hard slog up against the current to get back to it after a 60 km day. We were able to paddle right into the caravan park, which had been on flood alert with all residents evacuated, machinery moved and doors taken off toilets and showers etc. The flood warning had been revised down (much to the annoyance of the manager who lost a lot of customers) so we were allowed to stay. The water came up another 30 cm during the night but our tents remained dry.

Murray River near Tocumwal: **Photos by Mike Bremers**

The next day we enjoyed a relaxing paddle down the river surrounded by forest and spotting koalas high up in the trees. Lunch was at a beautiful spot on a levee bank. Downstream from here the river flooded into the forest and few dry campsites were available. We thought we might have to tie our kayaks to a flooded picnic table and sleep on top of the table. At about sunset just as we thought we would even be lucky to find a flooded picnic table, we found a raised irrigation levee. It was a beautiful campsite with green grass and red gums.

Being a member of the CBC has provided me with the opportunity to learn bushwalking and paddling skills and tips (apart from paddling in pyjamas) from experienced members such that I have been able to gain confidence to lead trips for others and undertake trips on my own. It has also enabled me to take part in trips to locations that I would not otherwise have known about. Furthermore, it has provided great companions for such outings.

Kayaking 2

Terence Uren

My first kayaking/canoeing experience with the CBC was in 1999. It was a Shoalhaven Gorge crossover trip. The rental canoes were heavy plastic—hard work to paddle and difficult to steer in the wind. However, I noticed that there were a couple of members paddling their own kayaks on the trip. After we set up camp, I borrowed one of these kayaks and was amazed at how easy they were to paddle and manoeuvre compared with the hire canoes. This experience prompted me to think seriously about becoming involved in kayaking.

Not long after this, I bought my first kayak and in November 1999 put my first kayaking trip on the Club's program—a six day tour

of Myall Lakes. This was followed over the next couple of years by weekend trips to the Clyde River, Durras Lake, Jervis Bay, the Hawkesbury River, Lake Jindabyne and many other places, as well as extended touring to beautiful locations such as the Croajingalong National Park. Regular Wednesday evening paddles on Lake Burley Griffin became a feature of the Club's program during the warmer months.

In 2002, I organised a series of open water paddles for Club members between Batemans Bay and Ulladulla, led by a professional instructor using hired sea kayaks. By the end of these paddles, a group of us had developed an enthusiasm for sea kayaking that required the development of skills beyond the limits of the CBC's insurance. Over time, this small group of CBC members has grown into a loose network of about 40 paddlers, many of whom still walk regularly with the CBC.

Through this network, I have been fortunate enough to participate in some exciting trips, both inside Australia and overseas to places like New Zealand, Greece, the High Arctic and Greenland—fabulous experiences that all began with a CBC weekend on the Shoalhaven!

Photo by Steven Shaw

Kayaking 3

The Cross-over trip

Gösta Lyngå

The sun shines over Tallowa Dam, when a gang of bushwalkers rent their canoes and set off from Kangaroo Valley towards the Shoalhaven Gorge between those impressive slopes. The water is flat and the canoeists disciplined, not splashing very much on their mates in the other boats. Morning tea near the hidden entrance of Bullangalong Creek preparing for the challenge of the faster flowing river towards Fossickers Flat.

Once there, an inviting camp site and short walks to explore the surroundings while waiting for the down-streamers to come in from Badgerys Spur. A pleasant evening around the camp fire, tall stories and the occasional sip of port.

In the morning the down-streamers take over the canoes, the car keys are exchanged and our gang starts on the upstream path along and sometimes in the beautiful river Shoalhaven. After Canoe Flat there is a negotiable crossing, sometimes wading, sometimes a compulsory swim. Several more swims before tackling Badgerys Spur, almost 500 metres of climbing. Some complaints are heard about Nature's way of placing the rivers at the bottom of the slopes, not where you actually need a good swim after the climb.

We have done this 'cross-over' walk a number of times, with Sandy Berry, Peter Henderson, Steve Shaw and myself leading the groups. Only once did the flooding of the Shoalhaven prevent the down-streamers from crossing, losing out on most of the joy. On that Sunday, the river was less wild and the up-streamers had no problem crossing.

Often the two groups will meet up at Marulan for a well deserved meal and exchange of experiences from this wonderful trip.

The Greg Buckley Award

Greg was a member of the club in the late 1980s, and was in fact a committee member when he joined a trek to Nepal led by CBC member John Balderson. As he trekked higher into the mountains Greg suffered from altitude sickness, which brought on pulmonary oedema. The party left him behind at a lower altitude to recover, and they expected that they could collect him on their return from the trek. When his condition deteriorated, he was evacuated by helicopter to Kathmandu, where he died of pneumonia. None of John's party were aware of the tragedy until they returned from their trek some weeks later. CBC member Doug Wright was instrumental in arranging for Greg's body to be brought back to Australia for burial.

Greg's parents gave some money to the club in recognition of Greg's love of bushwalking and his service to the club on the committee. The CBC committee decided, in consultation with Greg's parents, to create a permanent award in Greg's name. The Greg Buckley award is given annually to a CBC member who has made a significant contribution to the Club's activity program, not necessarily in the current year.

Award winners have been: Alan Vidler, Chris Leslie, George Carter, Vance Brown, Allan Mikkelsen, Richard Bain, Terence Uren, Jeff Bennetts, Meg McKone, David Campbell, Janet Edstein, Roger Edwards, Gösta Lyngå, Stan Marks, Keith Thomas, John Kelly, Rupert Barnett, John Evans, Doug Wright, Rob Horsfield, and Jenny Horsfield.

Gourmet weekends: good food, good walks, good company

Gourmet weekend walks are a popular and long-standing tradition in the CBC. They provide both an opportunity to experience beautiful day walks outside of Canberra and to enjoy the company of other people over one or two pleasant meals. The participants get to show off their culinary skills in a 'bring your own dish' shared meal, as well as to sample the cuisine in affordable local restaurants on longer trips.

For many years, leaders have been organising weekend stays for Club members in memorable mountain and coastal locations around the ACT, NSW and Victoria. George Carter was renowned for his south coast winter solstice car camp in the 1990s/early 2000s; members pitched their tents by the sea on a moonlit night and sampled antipasto while sipping wine… sometimes even Alan Davey's special homemade variety was on offer. There were usually one or two sore heads when the group did the stunning walk around beach headlands and through coastal forest the following day!

Sylvia Flaxman and Lynn Atkinson introduced CBC members to rustic cabins set in tranquil rural scenery in Tilba Tilba to do the classic day walk up Mt Gulaga (Dromedary). And Janet Edstein was one of the early pioneers of the always popular lodge weekends in the Snowy Mountains, where Club members were offered a variety of on-track and off-track hikes around the main range. Club members have even dined in 'formal' attire on the top of the Castle in the Budawangs, after Rob and Jenny Horsfield set the standard for wearing ties on the occasion. The food, along with some of the outfits that came out of peoples' overnight packs, was definitely memorable.

Gourmet walk to Old Currango November 1967
Photo by Reet Vallak

In recent years, leaders like Barry Keeley and Stan Marks have perfected the weekend experience, discovering great new bushwalks and appealing places to stay. One example is the Bundanoon gourmet weekend. CBC members get to stay at the charming Bundanoon Youth Hostel, a renovated early 20th Century home, and enjoy a shared meal by the homestead's cozy fireplace. They experience a variety of walks in scenic southern tablelands locations, such as Nattai Gorge, Mt Carrialoo and Bargo Gorge.

Gourmet walk Bundanoon August 2011
Photo by Barry Keeley

Barry Keeley has also led a very popular week long trip to the Victorian Alps over the New Year period, where Club members got to stay in ski lodges at Mt Hotham with great views. On the New Year's Eve 2010 trip, a total of 31 walkers were offered a choice of 21 trips run by 10 different leaders, ranging from easy to demanding. This included the spectacular 24 km out-and-back walk along the Razorback to the summit of Mt Feathertop. A social highlight of the week was the terrific New Year's Eve dinner and celebration at a local pub with a live band that looked like they were as old as the mountains themselves!

Club gourmet weekends… a great CBC tradition that we hope will continue for many years to come.

Gourmet walk Depot Beach August 2008
Photo by Alison Milton

Mountains of discovery

Thirty years of exploring the MacDonnell Ranges

Note: As few geographical features in this area are named on the maps and most Indigenous names are generally unavailable, unofficial names in this article are in inverted commas on first use. A longer, chronological account with details of each trip and the party members' names will appear on the Club's web site.

All photos by Meg McKone

Imagine the bones of a high mountain range where 330 million years of erosion have laid bare the Earth's ancient paroxysms. Yet the result is beautiful rather than brutal for the clear light's angles add a palette of rusty red and burnt orange, deepest blue and misty mauve, and the vigour of life softens the shattered rock. Uncharted routes cross these ranges, unexplored canyons crease their flanks and unexpected springs lie like hidden crystals in their gorges.

I had only a vague impression of the MacDonnell Ranges when in 1980 I received an invitation that was to have a considerable impact on my bushwalking life. Canberra Bushwalking Club members, Frank and Joan Rigby, who had done several exploratory walks along the Chewings Range with their other club, the Sydney Bushwalkers, asked me to join them on a trip to the West MacDonnells. It was the start of an abiding interest in these magnificent desert ranges, an interest that has led me to many unforgettable walks and some significant discoveries.

Frank and Joan set a pattern that was to stand me in good stead for the future—divide a fortnight into two separate walks, restocking with food between each one, and build in base camps that enable the party to explore routes and gorges, which would be difficult to negotiate with a heavy load. It was from one of these base camps that I first caught sight of an unforgettable chasm. From the ferny, permanent pool at Giles Yard Springs, we climbed to the top of the Chewings Range, stopping to admire the Upper Springs on the way, where several pools and a small water-filled canyon lie cradled in the bedrock about two-thirds of the way up the mountain. The top of the range gives unparalleled views to the east, where a narrow line of steep mountain tops leads the way to a great curving wall, its base scalloped with eroded bands of rock as it swells out into a double spine on its march towards Alice Springs. We continued west along the rocky, spinifex-clad tops, sometimes rounded, sometimes knife-edged, for several kilometres, until we stopped, amazed at a chasm which dropped sharply on the northern side of the range to the plains beneath. Great red ramparts leaped up out of the depths of this amphitheatre, in the middle of which a canyon cut a sinuous path to its narrow opening. Was it possible to gain access to the canyon? Here lay a challenge that was to occupy several future trips.

View east along the Chewings Range from above Giles Yard Springs

I did not return until 1989 when I accompanied Irene Davies, Peter Conroy and Brian Palm on a walk from Redbank Gorge, over Mt Sonder to Ormiston Gorge, over Mt Giles and on to Serpentine Gorge. With the unnamed chasm in mind, we dropped off the 'Red Wall' to the northern side of the Chewings Range, whose great red barrier, steeper and seemingly drier on the northern side than on the southern, stretched off into the far distance. We headed across the 'Mini Pound' to some gorges, but despite the wet season they were too steep to hold accessible water. Had we walked several kilometres further east, we would have found the entrance to the chasm.

This was my second ascent of Mt Giles, and by a different route, climbing onto the 'North-South Ridge' with its spectacular ramparts falling away into Ormiston Pound. We descended a little east of Mt Giles's summit down a terrifyingly steep creek overhung by rotting rock bollards to the southern side of the range. The weather was deteriorating as we camped beyond Giles Yard Springs, so we abdulled the golden tan tent to fit us all in, then closed it off with the fly on the open side and hung groundsheets over the ends. Though it was pouring with rain and freezing cold outside, we were warm and snug within. Further on, our ascent of a peak on the narrow section of the range proved highly significant, though I didn't realise it at the time. From the summit I noticed the head of an attractive valley to the east where the range expanded to a double ridgeline. The map showed the valley to be about three kilometres long—a possible candidate for an interesting gorge.

My first two trips had provided the background and inspiration for two spectacular discoveries in the next decade – 'The Canyon of Defiance' and 'Portals Canyon'.

The next two trips were devoted to finding out more about the unnamed chasm. In 1991, the Rigbys, my husband Frank and I climbed once again to the spot on the range where we could look down into the amphitheatre and see the white rocks at the bottom of the creek as it headed into a canyon and disappeared from sight around a huge red bulge in the cliffs, only to reappear before dropping to the plains below. The slopes down into the gorge looked impossibly steep and the step onto the plains might have an impassable drop. As we mused over a possible name, Frank Rigby suggested 'The Canyon of Defiance', a tribute to its seemingly impregnable nature.

It was obvious that we would have to approach the canyon from the northern side if we were to have any luck reaching its inner depths. In 1992 we found a route over the range at a low point a few kilometres east of Giles Yard Springs, then walked westwards until we reached a broad creek bed

emanating from between high red cliffs with several pristine rock pools a short way upstream. It was the mouth of our canyon, a great place to camp for three nights while we attempted to find a way in.

First we tried the direct route up the creek but were stopped by a six metre drop. Next we climbed through cliffs on the western side of the gorge and walked along a flat ridge between the Canyon of Defiance and another gorge to the west. The slopes into our canyon were too dangerous to descend, though we could see a possibility on its eastern side. We spent some time exploring the gorge to the west, most of which is at a higher level than the Canyon of Defiance, naming it 'Pats Canyon' for Pat Miethke who found a way in via a ramp. We now had only one chance left. Ascending the slope to the east of our camp, we clambered up a steep gully and down an even steeper one to a side creek of the Canyon of Defiance, then descended to the main creek bed above the drop. A short way upstream we felt as if we were diving into the bowels of the earth, surrounded by glowing red and gold walls as we followed the canyon round the 'Big Red Bulge', straddling pools and wriggling up behind a chockstone until we reached a bowl full of rounded pebbles beneath an impassable drop. Though the canyon continued above us, we couldn't climb into it. Yet what we had discovered was spectacular enough to satisfy us, and the unsurpassed sunrises on the high entrance cliffs were an added bonus.

Sunrise on the cliffs at the mouth of the Canyon of Defiance

In 1996, we climbed into the Canyon of Defiance by its most direct route, when John I'Ons led us up beside the waterfall on a flimsy clothesline, purchased in Alice Springs, because John and I had each expected the other to bring the rope. Lynn froze on the out-of-balance move on 'Crisis Rock' until John ordered, *"You can climb it, and you will!"* Grahame Muller led the way (this time with a proper rope) in 1999, but since then we've entered by the longer, safer route. In 2008, Pat and Eric Pickering must have set a seniors' record when, aged in their mid-seventies, they made it all the way to the bowl of pebbles.

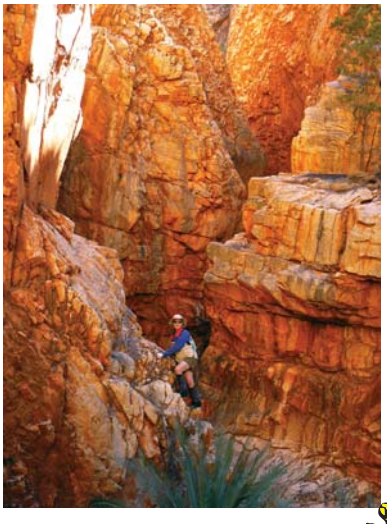
On the 1996 trip we also did some significant route-finding. A rock scramble up beside a vertical drop in Pat's Canyon led us to a scree slope and out to 'Termite Saddle' with its magnificent view of Mt Sonder floating in deep blue shadows above Ormiston Gorge. We were close to the top of the range, and in 1997 we joined all the dots on a freezing day with sleet blowing across from Mt Zeil when we achieved a high crossing of the range from Giles Yard Springs to the mouth of the Canyon of Defiance. I've repeated this route twice, and consider it unsurpassed for its spectacular views, challenging scrambles and intricate interweaving of valleys, ridges and gorges.

Though I had twice planned to explore the high valley spotted in 1989, we had been foiled by injury and lack of time. By 1999 it was obvious that if I didn't dedicate the start of a trip to investigating it, I would never get there. From the new locked gate at the edge of the national park about 10 kilometres east of Giles Yard Springs, we headed north to the Chewings Range, then followed it east until we found a creek with water and a few small spots to camp. We ascended the creek and the ridge to its west to the top of the range. Below us, a long, double-cliffed gorge flowed east then bent at right angles to exit on the northern side of the range. Twin cliffs barred a drop inside the inner gorge, inspiring the name 'Portals Canyon'. The only way to get closer was to go back to the top of the creek and follow it down, which we did quite easily, descending a few minor drops, until we reached a large drop just before the Portals. To see the main canyon, however, as with the Canyon of Defiance, we would have to explore upstream from the northern side.

We spent two shortish days walking down the southern side of the range to Ellery Creek and Fish Hole, then back up the northern side to the mouth of our gorge, where we found a lovely campsite with trees and flowering bushes, and a series of crystal clear pools cut into the grey quartzite. The gorge soon narrowed to a deep, icy wade and then a short compulsory swim before a chockstone. Grahame and I were the only ones left by now and I didn't feel like climbing the chock with bare feet (having left my boots further back), so Grahame went on and returned about 10 minutes later to report a slot canyon with more swims that opened out further on. We would have to return with suitable footwear.

A swim through one of the slots in Portals Canyon

The inaccessible gorge at the top end of Portals Canyon



2000 was the year we did as much of Portals Canyon as is possible without abseiling gear—a great start to the new century! As far as I know, we were the first non-Indigenous people to explore it. Portals Canyon is a stunningly beautiful and exciting canyon, with its narrow, dark,

compulsory swims, powdery white ghost gums and flowering shrubs, crystal clear cascades and pools, glowing orange rock walls and challenging climbs. I have happily visited it several times since. Next day we found a route to the top of the range on the eastern side of the Portals gorge and walked west along the tops until we joined up with our route from the previous year. We now had another high level route across the range for future reference.

At the far north-western end of the MacDonnells lies Mt Zeil, 1531 metres, the highest peak west of the Great Divide. As the water situation there was unknown to me, I contacted the Central Australian Bushwalkers and was told, *"Depends what you call water."* Clearly, it wasn't a trip to tackle during a drought. In 1997, we were dropped off on the north side of the mountain and walked a few kilometres to the mouth of the main creek. Unlike so many gorges in the Chewings Range, there was no pool of water at its mouth, and we had an anxious 45 minutes rock-hopping upstream before we found any. It was a long day climbing to the summit, and most of us only made it to a shoulder, which gave us great views to Razorback, Mt Sonder and the Chewings Range. I was on antibiotics for a throat and chest infection, and running on adrenalin. Mark and Irene went on to the summit and got back to camp just before dark.

In preparation for our dry 30 kilometre walk south to Redbank Gorge, Paul wasn't keen to spend an afternoon going back upstream to collect water, and his wineskin was leaking. Finally we loaded him up with our Sigg bottles and carried our own water in wineskins as we all set off with about eight litres each for the crossing. Though we found a pool of reasonable water on the eastern side of Mt Zeil, our camp in Crawford Creek was dry and the temperature below freezing. Next day, after crossing a lot of country devastated by cattle and camels but with great views of the mountains around us, we camped at a big pool about five kilometres north of Redbank Gorge before continuing on to the road-head.

After a month's trip up north, Frank and I returned through Alice Springs to investigate other routes to Mt Zeil. As all the roads around the southern and western side of Razorback bristled with No Trespassing signs, we decided to climb Razorback in a day through the national park, a 22 kilometre 10 hour return walk from Redbank Gorge. We found a deep pool of good water in a gorge on the south-east side of Razorback and a delightful ridge up to the summit with wonderful views across to Mt Zeil. It looked a great route for a wet season.

Then in 1999, we joined Grahame and his wife Maureen on a joy flight over the West MacDonnells. An isolated peak, marked 1179 metres, stood out on the north side of the Chewings Range but appeared dry and inaccessible. Further on, water glinted in a gorge on Mt Razorback's north-western side. Using Razorback as a route to Mt Zeil was looking more of a possibility.

I've climbed Mt Zeil twice more, in 2004 and 2009, each time from Redbank Gorge and over Razorback. Each crossing of the valley between Razorback and Mt Zeil has followed a slightly different route, each one full of surprises, from hidden valleys with beautiful flowers in the creek beds to unexpected rock pools after rain. We had a less agreeable surprise in 2009 when we found that the pool where we were camping on the south-east side of Razorback had been fouled by camels. Fortunately, recent rain had filled the rocky creek bed above with pools of clean water. The climb up the south side of Mt Zeil is 800 metres, either up a long ridge or up the face, avoiding the high cliffs below the summit. The view stretches from the top of Hugh Gorge in the east to a sea of isolated peaks disappearing off into the western desert, and from the meteorite crater of Gosses Bluff in the south to the Tanami Desert in the north.

Approaching the southern face of Mt Zeil

Another area I was keen to explore was the country between Hugh Gorge and Ellery Creek. The map showed several gorges heading south off the Chewings Range before a creek cut a dogleg right through the range 10 kilometres west of Hugh Gorge. Surely it would hold water and a protected campsite? This proved to be so, and 'Mulga Creek' has provided an excellent base for several trips. The first one was in 2000, when we explored a few of the gorges along the way, the most interesting being 'Pyramid Gorge', named for the triangular red hill near its top and containing a beautiful mossy canyon which corkscrewed upwards, suggesting the name 'Spiral Canyon'. Further on was 'Redback Gorge', named in honour of the quickly demolished spider that crawled out of my pack harness. Here we camped on a long, grassy flat amongst callitris pines and collected our water above the brumby-polluted pool at the mouth of the gorge.

Also prominent on the map but invisible from the south side of the Range was Peak 1179 metres which we had flown over in 1999. After walking up a side creek to the west of our camp in Mulga Creek, Pat and I continued on up a steep spur to the top of the Range, reaching a high saddle with a marvellous view of the peak framed between two ridges. Later I wrote, *"Below us a white creek bed wound across the valley, a magical path to our 'Peak Alone', standing radiantly surrounded by shafts of sunlight which had just broken through the clouds. The mountain rose to form an almost perfect cone, its white quartz sides traced with rusty veins and dotted with native pines."* We didn't have time to climb it on this trip, but did so the following year (2001). Our route up was extremely

Peak Alone

steep, but most of the rock was solid with good handholds. The view was magnificent—from the mountains above Hugh Gorge in the east to Mt Zeil in the west, a 90 kilometre stretch of the Chewings Range. And immediately to the west of us the as yet unvisited section of the range as far as Ellery Creek looked interesting and relatively easy.

In 2006 we set out to traverse this section from Ellery Creek to Mulga Creek, a walk of 14 kilometres with heavy packs. Concerned that we mightn't find water on the northern side of the range, we stuck to the southern side, hoping to camp along the way. But any gorges with water lacked campsites and any spots suitable for camping lacked water, so it was a tired party which finally reached the Mulga Creek campsite.

The first week of our 2009 trip had begun with steady rain, so, although the water in Fish Hole where we had camped was still dodgy, I decided to risk exploring the northern side of the range. Barely a kilometre further on, we found pristine pools in a spectacular side creek, which I learned later was Milton Park Gorge. As we followed east alongside the range, we negotiated several ups and downs as we crossed the north-flowing creek beds. We found a pretty campsite and some decent water at one, which we named 'Bent Gorge'. I was keen to explore 'Trident Gorge' a little further on. It showed three prongs on the map, though in reality there were four. We explored three of them with Drew running up the fourth (one of the central prongs), which he declared the best, and climbed to the top of the range, following an undulating arête until we could look down into Bent Gorge. It was a great relief, when we finally reached the western side of Peak Alone, to find pools of rain water in a rocky outcrop.

So why do I continue to walk in this remote, semi-arid region? Not all has been plain sailing. We've had our share of accidents, equipment damage and failure and human perversity. The temperature can vary greatly, from well below freezing to uncomfortably hot. Waterholes can dry up or be polluted by feral animals, and conversely, wet weather can make creek crossings difficult. On my last trip, in 2010, unprecedented rains forced us to swim across Ormiston Gorge.

Yet after 14 major trips and a total of 26 weeks of walking, there are still areas to explore, and for me nothing equals the exhilaration of genuine exploration in beautiful surroundings. The more time I spend in the MacDonnells, the more convinced I am that they offer some of the best bushwalking country on the mainland of Australia.

Meg McKone

The principal features at the western end of the Chewings Range

A view of the southern side of the Chewings Range from the pass three kilometres east of Ellery Creek Big Hole