



**CANBERRA  
BUSHWALKING CLUB**

**1961 - 2001**

**40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Special Edition**

Corroboree Way



# Canberra Bushwalking Club

## 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Magazine

OCTOBER 2001

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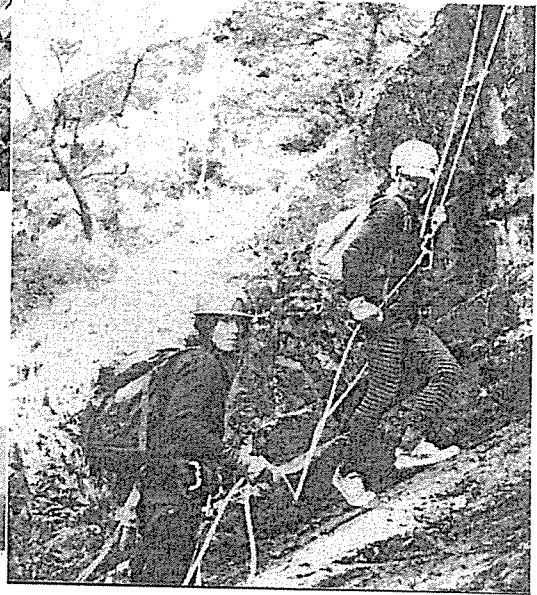
## INTRODUCTION

We hope you enjoy reading this magazine, which celebrates 40 years of the Canberra Bushwalking Club. The articles show the many and varied activities that have been important to club members over the years: primarily bushwalking, but also skiing, orienteering, rock climbing, canoeing, caving, cycling and canyoning. As the founders of the Club soon discovered, for those with the good fortune to live in the ACT, there is great bushwalking country in every conceivable direction; and so these articles by club members describe trips to the Budawangs, Namadgi, the Blue Mountains, Ettrema, the South Coast, and the Victorian and NSW Alps. Also reflected in these pages are the strong themes of friendship; the challenge of exploring remote and beautiful regions; and work undertaken to protect and promote our mountains and bush land. Thanks to all those club members who have contributed articles, and for friends who helped with production, especially Janet Edstein and Vance Brown.

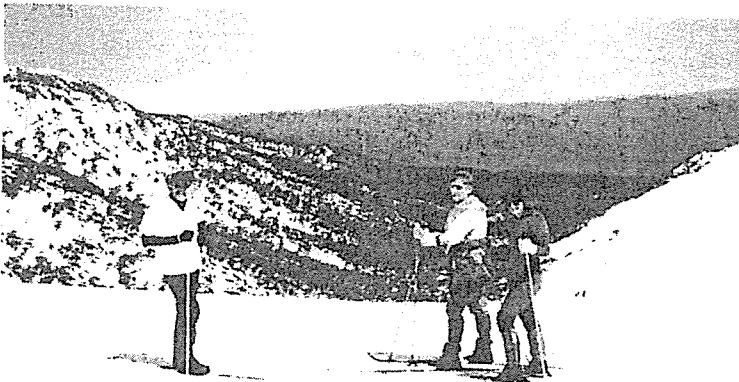
*Jenny Horsfield*



*Bushwalking on Mt Scabby*

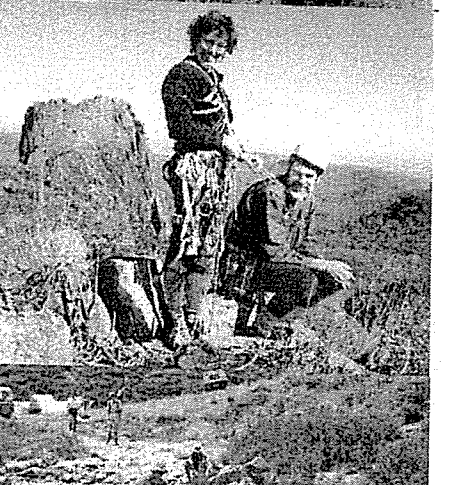
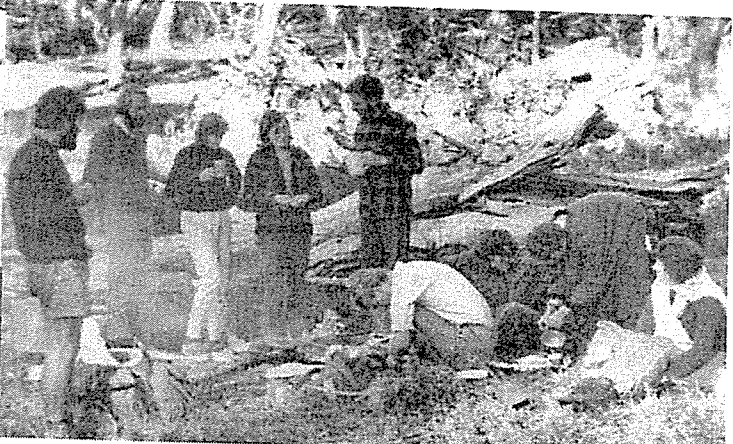


*Abseiling at Jerrara Falls*



*Cross country skiing party*







## HOW IT ALL STARTED

### *Remember the good old days - these!*

It appears from Matthew Higgins book *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 (CNTC), 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 3 lunch packs the passing Master of University House, Professor Trendall, audibly whispered "pig!"

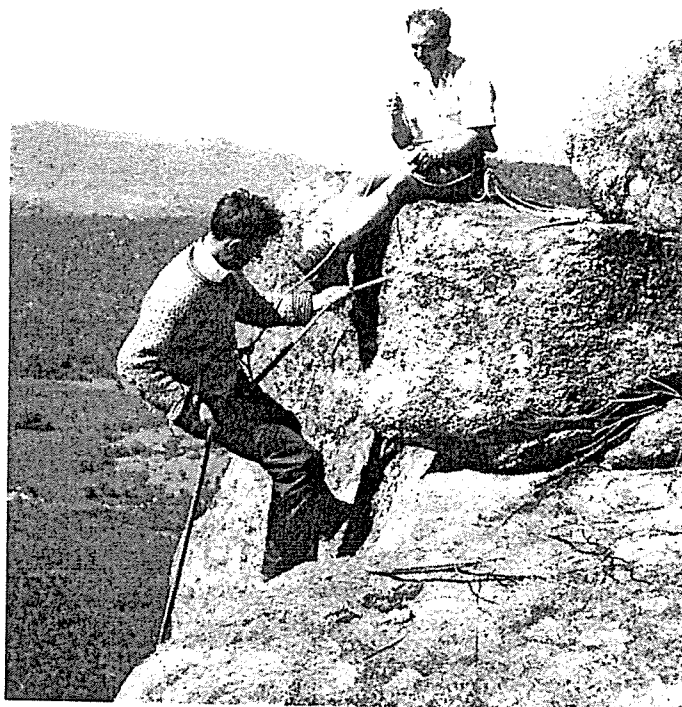
The search for something better led me to an interview with an officer of the CAC who explained that while his group had organised bush walks in the past it now focused almost entirely on skiing and ski touring. He pointed me down a track to one Jack Leslie who had been the 1947 foundation President of the Canberra Walking and Touring Club (CWTC). The CWTC had taken its name from the Melbourne Walking and Touring Club (formed 1894) and included as members people like Jack Leslie 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 March, 1960) that was running day excursions as part of its program.

The outcome of all these soundings was a preliminary meeting in Gösta's flat at University House on 15th 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.



*Geoff Mosley and Gösta Lyngå near Booroomba Rocks*

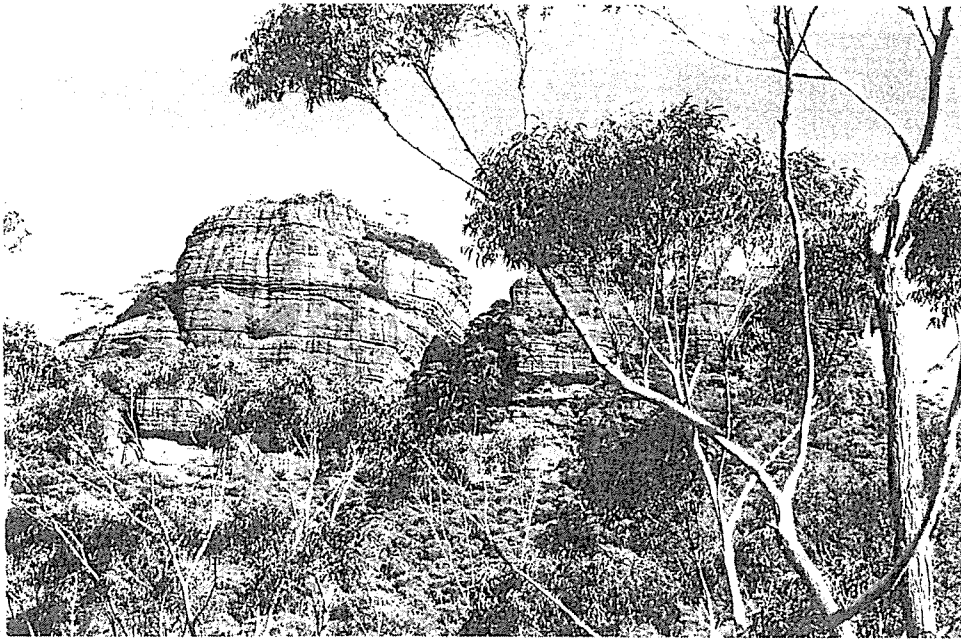
A further meeting to get things underway was held at Margot Cox's flat on 29th November. The notice for the meeting said '*since the group fell into abeyance Canberra has grown from a small town into a sizeable city and ...it is now large enough to support a separate independent walking club*'.

The subscription was fixed at five shillings and the first monthly meeting was arranged for 17th 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.



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. It 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 exchange of car transport. By



*Shrouded Gods Mountain in the Budawangs*

the time the parties left, the planned "camping together on top of the Castle" had been changed to top of Mt Renwick (now Mt Owen). It 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 westbounders got going very early and rushed to the top of Renwick to find the eastbounders having a leisurely breakfast.

Now lawyers could get to work on the question of which was 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 others who understandably could not wait for a walk program went on the Bungonia trip which included Pauline Hiscox, Jenny Wilson (later Gibson) and Hugh Morris.



The Club Constitution was ratified at the annual meeting on 21st February, 1962. This

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 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 Christmas 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 in October this year); Noel Semple (whose membership lapsed in 1967 but who recently rejoined); Doug Wright (as enthusiastic as ever) and Geoff Marston (who languishes overseas). Noel kindly contacted Bert Pennett (now about 84 and one of the foundation members of the original Canberra Walking and Touring Club). Six memories are better than one.

*Geoff Mosley*

## Antediluvian Orienteering

One bright autumn Sunday in the hills southeast of Queanbeyan there was a sudden movement as the fifteen 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 1:63360. 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).

Back in 1962 the kangaroos had not yet seen many men 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.



*First Orienteering in the ACT, 1962*

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 a married couple, Doug and Maxine 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.

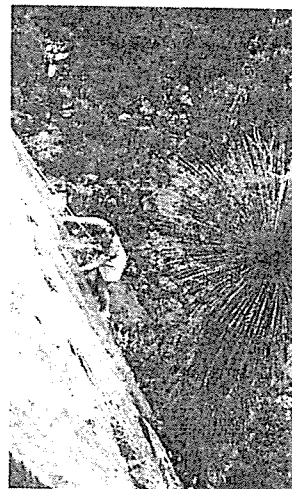
The past 40 years have seen an enormous change of the sport. Not only are there now several specialised orienteering clubs, whereas we were doing orienteering as an exciting change on the bushwalking program. The maps frequently used today display a particular area on a 40 times larger scale and give 5 metres contours rather than 50 feet. More accurate, but surely less scope for adventures.

*Gösta Lyngå*

## Early Climbing on Coree

The rocks are still there after those volcanic eruptions some 400 million years ago, even the names of the climbs are there after those bushwalkers' climbing activities some 40 years ago. This is Mount Coree, a well known profile from the nation's capital. On the North buttress there is St. Vitus Dance and Karl's Twist pioneered by Karl Erett and Tony Fortey in 1962, on the middle buttress Swenglish and some other routes first tried by Martin Grace and yours truly about the same time and on the Upper South Buttress Johnny's Swing, the name of which John Wanless can explain to those who care to listen.

Canberra Bushwalking Club found during its first years that nobody else in our beautiful little bush capital cared about rock-climbing and with the former alpine guide Karl Erett being a member and some other members being keen to learn, we spent some memorable days and week-ends up on Coree trying out ourselves and the various possible routes. The result: the first draft of a guide, which is now completely out of print but the descriptions of which live on in later guide books.



*Climbing at Bungonia*

Trips were made to other climbing areas like the limestone cliffs at Bungonia and the granite rocks at Booroomba. In retrospect it is obvious that climbers would eventually prefer those exciting granite features of Namadgi National Park but also the rhyolite of Coree offers solid rock. Perhaps the climbs are shorter than some would wish for, but there are many of them along the Western side of the mountain. For abseiling the place is excellent; some spots give options of free abseils as well. Forty years ago those activities were carried out with rope only, or rope + sling. In a couple of cases the survival of the bravest seemed a miracle. More about that after dinner.

*Gösta Lyngå*



## Bushwalking Memories

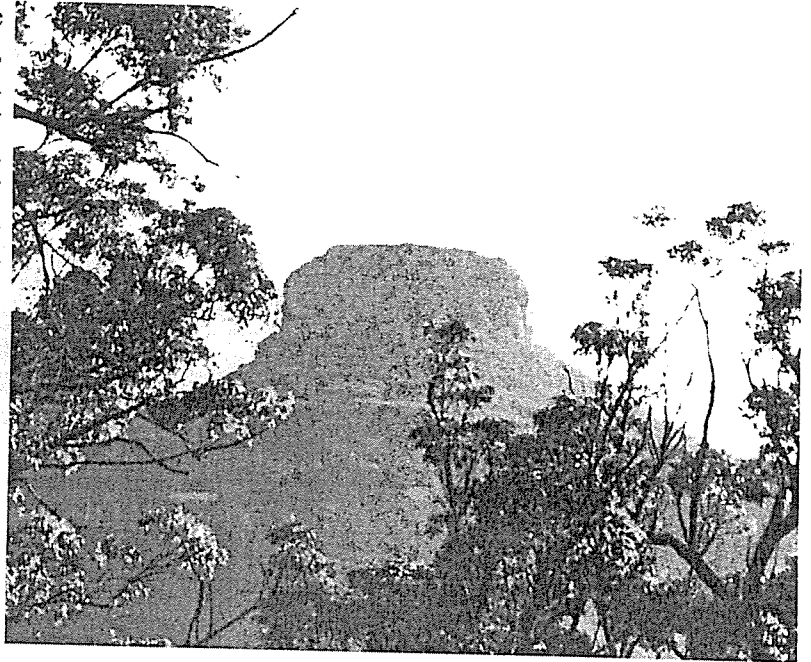
I joined the Canberra Walking and Touring Club, as the Club was then called, in the winter of 1962, shortly after my arrival in Canberra as a young public servant in what was then the Department of Trade. I think that it was Margot Cox, our librarian, who first told me of the Club's existence. Among the leading lights at that time were Geoff Mosley, Harry Black, Noel Semple, Julie Henry, Don Stoddart and David Gibson. The monthly meetings were held at University House which in those days was primarily a residence for graduate students who provided the Club with a continuous supply of keen members. I think that my first trip was a Sunday jaunt to Ginninderra Falls, now encroached upon by suburbs, and it was on Sunday trips to such places as Endrick Falls, Gibraltar Creek, the "Big Hole" and Araluen, that I first encountered the Australian bush.

I distinctly remember Doug Wright (whom I had engaged as purchasing agent in Sydney) handing me a Paddy Pallin orange A-frame with the portentous words: "You are now the owner of a tent" but I cannot recall which was my first overnight trip. One of the earliest was a serious walk in the southern Blue Mountains in October 1963. On the final day we encountered the Wollondilly River running in spate at Goodman's Ford. Our leader, Harry Black, who had run the Australian base in Antarctica, was not deterred. He tied each of us to a climbing rope attached to Ray Fairfield, the strongest swimmer, and, with our packs wrapped up the best we could and serving as floats, we were towed across the flood. Ray Fairfield was also an amateur pilot and I recall making a reconnaissance flight with him in "Charlie Bravo Charlie" to inspect the Budawangs and Ettrema Gorge in anticipation of future walks. Does anyone do this now?

There were favourite areas. Mine were the Budawangs. Although the Coast and Mountain Walkers' map was already published, they was still remote and it was not always easy to find the way even as far as Corang Peak. There is a certain aroma which I associate with the Budawangs, probably the exhalation of the vegetation growing in that type of soil. Occasionally I have encountered it in milder form elsewhere and the recognition instantly takes me back thirty years to days on the Castle or nights under the Bibbenluke Walls. Another area - the word "favourite" might not be entirely appropriate - was the Woila country. Geoff Mosley has well described elsewhere our attempts to explore what was then virtually unknown and unmapped country (G. Mosley, "Discovering



Mother Woila", *Wild*, Issue 66, October-December 1997, pp. 42-7). I entirely share his sentiment about the special enjoyment in exploring a primeval area. I may return one day if only to recover a pair of British Army boots I abandoned on "Deadfall Ridge". But possibly not; the sight of the fire roads marked on the



*The Castle*

present Badja 1:25,000 map indicate that things are not what they were - as does the very fact that the area is mapped at all. Although I may never see the Woila again, memories of it are still strong, in particular Christmas 1965 when Martin Williams and I battled up the Woila Creek from Belowra. Before boiling-up a tinned Christmas pudding, I had spread out my sleeping bag on the bank. By chance turning my head, I saw an inquisitive black snake about to dive inside!

But walks with the Club were not all "tiger" trips. As a reaction to undue solemnity, a "gourmet walk" was organised to Currango in November 1967. In scorching weather we humped in quantities of smoked salmon, oysters, prime steaks and the like, and, with some in dress shirts, we set out the spread only to be scattered by the explosion of John Cashman's stove. Humour was (well nearly) always present. I recall an occasion when, on the summit of a peak in the direction of Tumut, hailstones fell of a size I have never seen before or since. Quick as a flash, John Cashman produced a hip-flask and served us whisky with ice cubes.

Occasionally - and it was only occasionally - things went wrong. The day Australia converted to decimal currency, most of the Club was struggling through soaking bush near Tidbinbilla in company with policemen clad in Wellington boots and carrying stretchers looking for a member who had disappeared



on a trip the previous day. Fortunately he found himself, as it were, and was back in safety long before those "in the field" knew of it. A few years later, Bob Story - whose death in 1999 I lament - suffered exposure while climbing Dampier Mountain from Bendethera. Four of us - and two dogs - walked through the night to fetch help from the Hornes at Khan Yunis station. When we returned in a vehicle early the next morning it was a joyful sight to see that Bob, propped up by Sybil, Judy and Muriel, had managed to descend to the Snowball plains under his own power. On another occasion, John Cashman, Bob de Viana and I dug a snow-cave at Guthega under the expert supervision of Harry Black. Our cave was superb and after copious use of the Spanish *bota* - an essential bit of kit in those days - we settled down to sleep in it. Unfortunately, during the night the outside temperature rose in an unprecedented and unforecast manner. Waking up suddenly with water dripping on my face, I saw that the exit tunnel from our cave was sagging. We just managed to extricate ourselves into the night before the whole thing collapsed.

My final recollection is not about a club trip as such but deserves to be exhumed from archival obscurity. In a bar one Friday night in October 1963 I came across a trio of marines - embassy guards I recall - who the next morning were planning to set off on a 50-mile walk to Bredbo, in order to satisfy the exhortations of President Kennedy. On the spur of the moment I agreed to join them and we left Civic at 3 a.m. with a stray dog in tow. After about 25 miles the squaddies - and the dog - gave up and we all went home. Under the banner headline "Walking Feat Abandoned", the *Canberra Times* reported the event. Although it was stated that I appeared to be still "quite fit" it also mentioned that I was President of the Club. Consequently there might have been the shadow of an innuendo that I was not professionally up to it. The honour of the Club being at stake, I recruited a trio of companions, including Noel Semple, and the following Saturday we set off in the small hours from Civic. Two of the group broke down en route but Noel and I marched into the Bredbo pub after 16 hours 20 minutes on the road. The *Canberra Times* duly printed my "press release" of the event. There is a postscript to this. A few months ago, Noel wrote to me as follows: "I think that if my life hung on it I could still walk the 50 miles in a day." Well, if I become dictator of Australia I shall decree that Semple be shot at dawn unless he can beat 16 hours 20 minutes to the Bredbo pub!

Good wishes to the Club for the next forty years.

**Geoff Marston**

## A Frog Appeared

The Canberra Bushwalking Club played an important part in giving me an active and enjoyable life in new surroundings when I came from Sydney in 1962. I had done little real bushwalking and had been camping only once, but I soon discovered that I enjoyed being deep in the bush and sleeping on the ground. Not everyone had cars then and the shared transport meant that everyone could join in.

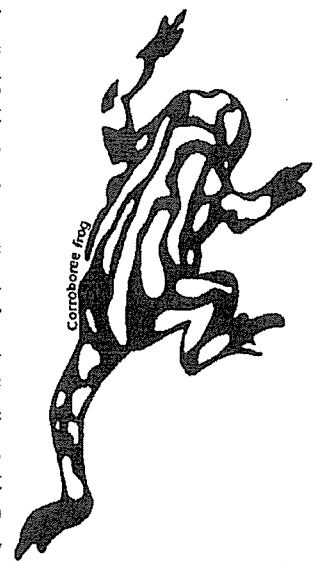
On club bushwalks I discovered the country around Canberra, from the Snowy Mountains to the south coast. I developed a sense of oneness with the country which I will never lose. I vividly remember first seeing carpets of snow daisies on the Main Range and of trigger plants near Mt Jagungal, and climbing between rock and ice cliffs at Blue Lake. Then overuse was not such a threat and we were able to camp right near the lake.

The first walk I attended was wet. We camped near Coree Hut and had to cook in the fireplace of the hut with a group of climbers. I struggled at first to fit in, but that soon became second nature.

One walk I remember well was led by Julie Henry. We set out along the range towards Mt Bimberi. Newcomers to bushwalking slowed us down but the fallen logs, snow grass and white tree trunks were enchanting in the mist; we modified our pace and concentrated on trying to make the newcomers happy. We did not succeed in that, and I did not reach Mt Bimberi until about 30 years later, being busy with family in between, but the support and encouragement that club members gave weaker walkers, and the spirit of all working together was more lasting than the achievement of reaching the top of Mt Bimberi.

Friends that I made in my few active years in the club are still good friends. The club did a lot for me, and I have to confess I did not contribute a lot in return, but one thing I did do was draw the club's emblem.

The corroboree frog was a fairly new discovery in the early sixties. It lived in the Snowy Mountains and Brindabella Range



*The Club Emblem*



where the club often walked. I don't remember just how the frog came to be chosen as the emblem, but Doug Wright says Harry Black arranged for someone studying the frog to talk at a meeting. I was one of few people then who had actually seen a corroboree frog, not, I confess, in the wild, but at Sydney University, and so I offered to draw it. I also drew the western skyline as seen from Canberra, with the Tidbinbilla Range and some of the Brindabellas. The frog with the skyline was printed as a letterhead and was used for the newsletter.

In the 60's the club printed the walk program, a monthly circular and *It* separately. The circular of April 1965 asked members to watch for the new letterhead, and the frog appeared in May 1965. The first *It* came out in December 1965 (announcing my first son's birth, among other things) but not till November 1967 did it carry the letterhead regularly.

*Eleanor Stodart*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Memories of the Shoalhaven

- Giant white serpent of mist seen from aircraft window on a winter morning.
- Being alone in a magnificent swimming hole while still being able to hear traffic on Warri Bridge.
- Standing on a rock looking down on the wonderful gorge and river before starting the descent.
- Descending steep shaly tracks jarring jellied knees.
- Abseiling alongside waterfall in Bungonia Creek.
- Magnificent vertical cliffs of Bungonia Gorge.
- Traversing under, over, round and through giant limestone boulders downstream from the gorge.
- Limpid green pools and trickling water in Bungonia Creek.
- Liloing through deep calm water on a hot summer day at the Blockup.
- Liloing through hairy white water rapids when the river is up!!
- Wide sandy beaches and magnificent swimming spots for long lunch times.



- Sitting on a rock in the middle of the river enjoying the wide open gorge with top lined with cliffs.
- Fireflies round the campfire on balmy late Spring night.
- Sleepless rainy night hoping the high and rising river will still be crossable the following day.



*Lunch Spot on the Shoalhaven*

- Sleeping on the sand and drinking tea under huge Casuarina trees on summer noon.
- Subterranean hymenopterans buzzing under ears in tents at Canoe Flat.
- Lyrebird performing on horizontal log.
- Exploring chimneys and old mine workings near Blockup Gorge.
- Reflections in still water on winter afternoon.
- Walking through open grassland, clear forest, sand or shingle, or rockhopping along the river.
- Swimming with packs across the river near Long Point.
- Last swim near Badgerys Spur before bracing for the ascent.
- Cresting the ridge at *Surprise View* from magnificent vista towards Blockup.
- Puffing up the endless climb before a rest on Mount Alexander.
- Walking along open ridge with panoramas on all sides.
- Relief to see Mt Ayre sign knowing the climb is over and the cars near.
- And many many more.

*Vance Brown*

## Membership from Afar

In 1970, when I was still a member of Coast and Mountain Walkers (CMW), the Commonwealth Bank moved me to Temora. Since from there most of CMW's trips were too far to join, I spent the first few months exploring southern NSW. Investigations revealed that the nearest outdoor clubs were Canberra Bushwalkers, Canberra Speleology Society, the Geehi Club and some group (possibly) connected to the Wagga Wagga Teacher's College.

Ultimately I settled upon CSS and CBW for my relaxation. However I had to be careful for once a trip finished I had a further 224 km to travel back to Temora. Consequently I only attended trips where I could achieve the best results (of seeing 'new' country). Distance wise the Budawang's were in - the Brindabellas were out. Round Mountain via Tumut was in - Round Mountain via Cooma was out. Fortunately I had a new Beetle which made travelling so much easier.

In June the Club supplied information about membership. My official first Club trip was Rodgers Hill -Hamlet's Crown - Ettrema Gorge -Cinch Creek late August. My application for membership was accepted in October when there were 191 members and membership cost \$2 pa; and the car formula was based upon 50 cents per gallon.

In preparing this article it was interesting to read where trips were programmed - how more venturesome the Club seemed for the time. The 'first' programmed trip into Ettrema was for August although there had been printed reports of either private and/or last minute trips (added to the program pinned up in Paddy's shop). Alan Moy had been leading trips to the Shoalhaven and had gradually pushed into this area.

*It is probably because of its relative inaccessibility and isolation that Ettrema retains its charms. Once inside you are in a natural environment with spectacular scenery and a magnificent creek which have yet to be spoilt or polluted by civilisation and 'development'. (Alan Moy)*

*From the [Pioneer] plateau - devastating view of Ettrema Gorge with its strongly cut, salmon coloured bluffs contrasting with the green new growth of trees and scrub. Candle-like banksia flowers in abundance. (Lesley Howlett)*

In those days the Club used to spend Friday night at the Endrick River crossing and drive in to the start of the walk on Saturday morning. You could even get to Rodgers Hill. In September there was to be an exploratory trip into Tullyangela Creek. The CMW had been visiting the Budawang's for years and I could

never understand why they never entered the area 'on the other side of the road'. In actual fact the CMW, and the SBW, had based walks from Yalwal but following construction (1971) of Danjera dam they had ceased to enter the area.

So although the lower reaches of many of the streams had been walked I don't believe places like Jones Creek or upper Ettrema Creek were ever or rarely entered by modern walkers. Hence a Bundundah Creek (exploratory) trip was scheduled for March 1971. And *it*(7/71) carried the report on the first trip down Bullfrog Creek.

Each long weekend (1970-71) the late Stephen Gisz programmed walks to the Blue Mountains which, for Sydney walkers, were weekend walks. Normally the Club would be undertaking weekend walks into Woila, Kydra area, Murruin Creek/Tomat Falls, Jagungal.

I owe a lot to Alan Moy who introduced me to the joys of Ettrema. Prior to his departure in June 1971 for Darwin he was bestowed with the name 'Ettremus' (Both Alan, and Russell Willis were prominent trip leaders of the Darwin Bushwalking Club for many years).

It was very late 60's that the policy of burn, bash & bury was seriously being challenged. March '71 *it* had a snippet about "Carry tins out!" I can recall it was the early '70s when we still used tin foil (Paddy had



Group of "old-timers" in the Budawang's

aluminium cooking foil as a 'new line' in 1959) to cook our meals, when the used foil was placed on the ashes for disintegration! (It was round 1972 that I first heard a call for all tin foil to be removed - not burnt on fires). Why is there no policy (today)



policy (today) requiring foam mats, if carried externally, be carried inside a cloth bag?

Contemporary members (I specifically recall) were Adrian Hobbs (joined 4/70), Gary Medaris (9/70), Frank & Joan (9/70) Rigby, Dan Buchler, Craig Alan, Stephen Gisz, David Whiteley (5/71) with his tam o'shanter, & flute, and Arminel Narrow (5/71). And of course there were the Story family and Harry Black with his tales of old Bendethera.

I was never a good club 'supporter' - having only attended one Club meeting in the past thirty years. (And then only because I happened to be in Canberra on business). By 1996 I had participated in 101 Club trips -averaging one trip a year in recent times. This may not be much of a record -but probably makes me one of the earliest members who still (continually) walks with the Club. Shades of Mr Walker - the ghost who walks.

*Warwick Blayden*

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## THEN AND NOW

I must admit I had already done a fair whack of walking and climbing in the U.K. and New Zealand before I arrived on the Canberra bushwalking scene in 1959 for a couple of months. Canberra I found was a small bush town and the back country areas were not well known. Margot Cox told me of the Canberra Bushwalking and Touring Club, took me caving and we broke into a small new cave in the Wee Jasper system. My first day walk in Canberra was down the gorge which is now the spillway to Lake Burley Griffin. It was a great delight to discover how simple it was to use eucalypt to get a billy boiling for the long lunch break.

Has the bush in the Canberra region changed much since then? Essentially no of course but in some places it has been thinned and where National Parks have been created all the amenities that go with catering for a larger number of visitors are plainly visible. Larger farms have been broken up so you see more houses, less soft edge signs, more bitumen roads and post and rail fences are hard to find. But as there are more cars now I no longer expect to see an echidna trundling across the road. Snakes, blue tongued lizards and goannas have fallen to feral dogs and cats. Dung beetles have reduced the large swarms of bushflies that made some walks less pleasant. However the large swarms of butterflies and grasshoppers that were in the district fell to the windscreen of my Volkswagon Beetle.



*Doug skiing with two friends*

Many club members owned a V.W. Beetle before the advent of four wheel drive vehicles. Before N.A.S.A.started rebuilding the road into the Orroral Valley my passengers had to walk the last two hundred feet of Fitz's hill otherwise the car would stall. Or was it just my V.W. that did this. As roads were poor and narrow, driving speeds were slower; you saw more of what was going on in the bush and the dead snakes and hawks stuck on barbed wire fences beside farmyard gates.

When I came back from Laos in 1963 I was glad the club was still going. The town hadn't grown that much but it was great that club members still provided transport for ANYONE who wanted to get out and join others in the bush. I think this is one of the club's great achievements. Remembering the Sydney bus and train hassle, particularly after a hard weekend, the service seemed a godsend. In any case, as far as Canberra was concerned, bus and train services were almost non-existent.

As with any new club, with so many interesting unknown areas around Canberra, there was as much an emphasis on exploring the region to learn the access routes into the Budawangs, the Shoalhaven, the Warrumbungles, the Weddin Mountains etc as to find new routes though the Brindabellas. It was soon seen that with so many new faces out on trips leaders had to develop some ground rules to look after stragglers. The theory was to have a back marker and for the leader to walk with the slowest member of the party. It sometimes worked.

Newcomers to Canberra were taken to the top of Red Hill to look over farm land and the bushland towards the Brindabella peaks. There were no suburbs beyond Chifley then in the south of Canberra. The 70 mile road to Cooma was a mix of potholes, bitumen and dirt and took two hours to drive at night. Rocks were particularly unavoidable on the road to Mount Franklin Chalet. My first map of Canberra and the area around was obtained from the Shell service station.

The Department of Lands Survey 1: 500,000 maps were available in 1960 but we had to wait until 1964 to be able to use the better 1: 250,000 series.

It was the conversation around the inevitable bushfire and billy tea at night followed by raucous singing that made weekends even more memorable. Through a sensible school curriculum most of the crowd knew some of the words. Harry Black had a good voice for carrying a tune and started a group that



went from house to house to sing old Australian Bush Ballads. Even then we extended the weekend's enjoyment by stopping off at the Paragon Cafe in Goulburn.

There were so many single people moving into Canberra from so many countries that the club also organised activities not strictly bushwalking, like a yabby catching competition in Lake Burley Griffin, a one off car rally, prawning, and watching a total eclipse of the sun down Eden way. The years from 1963 to 1966 were busy ones. The club made its first ascent of the Pigeon House before the ladders went in. Ettrema Gorge was known but not explored. Geoff Marston and Noel Semple tackled Mother Woila enthusiastically and even took up President Kennedy's challenge that every man should be able to walk 50 mile a day. Dick Sykes and Chris Waters were benighted on Mount Cook. Robin Miller followed and suffered the same fate sitting on a coiled up rope with a tin of sardines.

The Club adopted its present name and Alice Eccles edited the first "it" Newsletter. Harry Black introduced a colleague from CSIRO to talk on the Corroboree frog. Gösta Lyngå got us interested in Orienteering and, with Karl Erett, produced a small guide to climbing the Booroomba Rocks. Search and rescue weekends took off after club members went to a joint NSW Federateration of Bushwalking Clubs get together in the Colo Valley and there were many young ladies placed with an imaginary broken leg who stayed put all day lamenting they were not found. The Club had joint weekends with the Canberra Alpine Club and members of the YMCA. Dorothy Brown said she would organise the Club's first introductory cross country ski trip and found that she had to find leaders and transport for eighty people.

Club meetings held at University House were quite formal with a table set up for President, Secretary and Treasurer. There was an agenda which required the minutes of the previous meeting to be read and approved. Motions were debated before each trip leader that month stood up and made a report of the trip he/she had just led, with interruptions from the members who had been with him/her. Then those leaders who had future trips planned would, in honeyed tones, tell of the delights of their particular trip in the hope that they could get more takers. Only then was the speaker introduced - if there was one. It always seemed worthwhile to go along to a meeting when you knew fifty percent of the club members would be there and that even more ladies were likely to be present.

Discussions over the question of where we could walk in the future led to a paper being written by Don Stodart and presented to our local member of Parliament with the suggestion that the Cotter Catchment area be amalgamated with land in the

Orroral Valley and be set aside as a National Park. As the club used the dilapidated Snowy Mountain huts Mike Hinchey and Rod Peters took it on themselves to organise work parties to make some of those we used more habitable, using original timber and tools by keeping out the rain and bush rats.

The somewhat older concepts of strict camping behaviour which contained a touch of the Australian bush dance separation of the sexes was challenged with the introduction of Spanish wine skins and shared tents (which people were always encouraged to do to save weight). This led to the suggestion, tongue in cheek, that a morals officer might be needed. With this on the agenda I thought I should leave the country again.

Doug Wright

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## ODE (OWED) TO BUSHWALKING

*Bushwalking - here I go again -  
you ask me, 'Why? What's to gain?'  
with answer uncertain I try to explain -*

*To the bushwalking club I came one day  
because I'd heard it was the way  
to keep old age and paunch at bay,*

*With dreams naïve of Arcadian scene  
of rolling hills and pastures green  
of rustic bridge over stream serene.*

*The bush in bushwalking was first surprise  
then mosquitoes and leeches of blood-sucking size  
dreams fade, to the truth I fast became wise.*

*The hills are mountains of breath seizing height  
the bridges old logs and a rickety sight -  
each quaking step over a shiver of fright.*

*The faintest of trails is known as a track -  
through boulders and scrub I fight with my pack  
through prickles and thorns and rain on my back.*

*Blistered feet, aching back, wobbling knees all vie  
for attention as wearily time passes by  
while the peak draws no nearer - I ask myself,  
'Why?'*

*But then there are times when the reason is plain:  
that moment the hard-fought peak is gained  
incomparable vistas repay all the pain  
the achievement explains  
and the reason is plain.  
Bushwalking - here I go again!*

Storm Foulkes



## Vignettes. I remember....

.....how delighted we were when we came across a bilum containing a loaf of bread sitting on the jetty at Cardwell, north Queensland. It was an indication that Greg Scott was around somewhere. Meg McKone, Henry Burmester, Frank Rigby, Rene Davies and I had made an arrangement four months previously to meet him there. In the interim, Greg had been walking in PNG.

We were setting off to Hinchinbrook Island. We climbed Mt Bowen, Pineapple and Nina Peaks which, today, are restricted areas. We also did the usual beach walk to Zoe Bay. I remember millions of midges at Nina Beach; green tree ants with huge nippers; waking up to find a leech in my mouth; sinking up to my crutch in mangrove mud; white-tailed rats which ate holes in packs and fabulous scenery.

Frank Rigby was the star of the show. Each night he would fold a white handkerchief over his arm, upturn his billy lid, produce a set of eye wash cups and fill them with a pre-dinner drink. He then recited excerpts, in a hilarious fashion, from "The World is full of Married Men" by Jacki Collins.

**I remember**..... full of enthusiasm, racing up the Clyde, from Yadboro, one Saturday morning with Pat Miethke, Stan Mulvany and Bob Harrison. I don't think we really knew what we were doing but we decided to knock off Cambage Head on Talaterang.

In recent years as I've walked past Cambage Head, I've wondered how the heck we did it but we did. We free-climbed and used a 12 metre x 7mm green hand-line. We weaved our way up the cliff face and finally sidled around to reach the falls on Talaterang for lunch. Very impressive.

**I remember**.....being in a Rocky Creek canyon, northern Blue Mountains, and finding there wasn't an abseil belay point anywhere. Meg McKone, Pat Miethke and I stood bewildered. The ever-resourceful, Ian Hickson, found a rather large log which he rammed with great gusto between the walls of the canyon. Nothing but brute force and optimism anchored that log. It did the trick. We abseiled off it.

**I remember**.....a brilliant clear Sunday morning sitting on top of the Donjon, Budawangs and being told of another Donjon trip. When Don Shepherd had been asked to throw the rope down from the top of the climb to those below so they could use it to pull up on, he threw the whole rope down. Coiled.

**I remember**..... Fred George, who was in his late sixties, keeping up with tigers, Gary Medaris and Terry Jordan and Brian Palm on very long, hard trips. And years later, Fred saying to me "This will be my last trip down Ettorema" and



me responding "Course it won't Fred". He was right. It was. Fred had stomach cancer.

**I remember**.....sleeping under Pat Miethke's fly at the campsite near the junction of Bumberry Creek and Tuross Gorge. There wasn't much space for tents and flies. In the middle of the night something, actually a foot, poked under the fly and woke me up. I screamed. The next thing I heard was Mick Croft saying "Oh what a calamity. Oh what a calamity. Oh what a calamity." Half asleep and slightly inebriated poor Mick had to release the contents of his bladder. What he didn't realise was that he was doing so on Pat's fly. Pat lay next to me killing herself laughing.

**I remember**..... Pat Miethke standing on the top of the third Sister, in the Blue Mountains, shouting abuse at Stan Mulvany who was chastising her for not abseiling off quickly.

Poor Pat was stuck behind a looney fellow, (a real nutter) who had attached himself to our party when we were climbing up the last Sister. Both Pat and Stan, at times, had fiery temperaments. The tourists who had been watching us retreated quickly up the track after Pat's outburst!

It was a fantastic weekend, Bob Harrison and David Carmichael were also on the trip. We climbed the West Wall beneath the Sisters and traversed all the Sisters on Saturday and christened Claustal Canyon on the Sunday.

**I remember**.....a cast of thousands, at least 14 or more, traversing Byangee Walls, Budawangs, from the Clyde on Saturday morning and spending all of Saturday afternoon tangling ropes on the eastern wall of the Castle. There were ropes and so-called climbing leaders all over the cliffs. Spaghetti and people everywhere. Tempers were frayed. Joan Rigby, Rene Lays, Warwick Blayden, Meg McKone, John and Ally Street, Pat Miethke, Stan Mulvany, Bob Harrison, Greg Scott, Cec and Dave Sutton and Henry Burmester were in this crazy group.



Stan Mulvany in Budawangs

We ran out of daylight. The cliffs on the Castle above Castle Gap are vertical, not exactly the ideal spot to camp. With nowhere to sleep, the team or so

called team split into two groups. A group without access to water and a group sleeping on a shelf that was a water course. Pat remembers traversing across a cliff face in the dark with only a hand-line. She was too tired to care about the huge drop below her.

I was in the uncomfortable dry camp. My bed was a small horizontal slot in the cliff face. Joan Rigby slept close by on a 60 degree slope. Stan was so worried about rolling off the watercourse shelf into the void below, that before going to sleep, he tied a rope around his and Pat's waists then tied the rope onto a tree.

Stan was the only person prepared to give the lead climbing a go on Sunday morning. He spent quite a while moving around the north-eastern side of the cliff before he found a route directly up the nose. A rock fell. It chipped Rene Lays' elbow bone. She had a tough time climbing up the remainder of the cliffs.

**I remember**..... camping in Gingra Creek, off Tiwilla Plateau, southern Blue Mountains, in a Paddy's Glen tent and Terry Jordan lighting a candle to read by. I woke up and saw the flap of the tent blow into the candle flame which ignited the japara (Terry had fallen asleep). I screamed. Keith Sneddon, who without a tent was sleeping in the rain under his groundsheet, pulling out the pegs of our flaming tent and rolling me out the side when I was still in my sleeping bag. Terry burnt half the tent.

**I remember**.....camping on top of one of the peaks of the Yodellers. The Yodellers, in the northern Blue Mountains, are a range of individual peaks of rotten rock separated by huge gaps. You rock climb up and then abseil off each peak.

Rene Lays, Dave and Cec Sutton and I were camped on the top of one peak and on the next peak were Keith Thomas, Anne Baylis and Henry Burmester. Keith had a massive burp after dinner. Nothing unusual about that. However, it sounded as if he was sitting next to us when in fact he was on the next mountain top. There was a 50 metre drop and 500 metres in distance between the two parties.

**I remember**.....because of that rotten loose rock, we subsequently lost Tessa on another trip to the Yodellers. We mourned a bright young soul.

**I remember** .....Alison Currie's tenacity to become proficient at rock-hopping. When she first started walking, Alison would plant her foot on a rock but it would always slip off! She put in a wonderful effort to learn to rock-hop. Finally she was hopping along with everyone else. I admired her for that.

**I remember**..... Bob Harrison driving Don Shepherd's dilapidated Holden to Budthingeroo, Kanangra Walls on Friday night. The Holden didn't arrive and I drove back to find them on Saturday morning. I had to take two flat tyres to Oberon to be

fixed. It was a long way. In the interim, Bob set up a rope and was teaching his passengers to abseil off a tree in a churchyard.

After the tyres were repaired, I had a hair-raising, very, very, fast drive back to Budthingeroo because I had to get back to the others by 11am. I made a dramatic reappearance from a cloud of dust by skidding around the Budthingeroo bend at 10.58am.

We subsequently tried to do Davies Canyon but retreated because of rain. Instead, we camped at the cars and indulged in copious quantities of wine and spirits. I recollect Bob Harrison saying that he couldn't get his head down to the ground to sleep and that the stars (out by then) were spinning in the sky. I had a hangover the next day.

**I remember**..... firing the guides on the summit of Mt Bangeta, a 4,500 metre peak in the Sarawet Range, PNG. Meg McKone was frightened that we would not find our way back to a village thousands of metres below or the guides would come back and attack us. When Mike Merrony, Geoff McVeigh, Meg and I returned to the village two days later, some of the guides had relieved looks on their faces. Some didn't!

**I remember**.....because of a late start, being be-nighted in February this year on a day canyon trip to Crikey Creek, northern Blue Mountains. It was raining. Thankfully, I had taken matches so we lit a huge fire. We tried to sleep through the drizzle. Robert Bibo in two garbage bags. Graham Muller in his wet suit. Linda Groom in her fibrepile and parka and me in my thermal singlet, parka and garbage bag.

**I remember** .....Mick Croft looking after me on a Brian Palm trip to Mt Donovan, Araluen. There wasn't any way that I could keep up with the fellows. As well as a few hills, we had 13km of creek bashing on the Sunday. Mick would go ahead then wait. He had a habit of tilting his head on the side to see into the distance. I'd look up from rock-hopping and there he'd be far ahead with his head tilted and as soon as he saw I was coming he'd be off again.

**I remember**.....Henry Burmester's 50 metre rope, in reality, was only 45 metres. This caused us some difficulty in Kanangra Slot, southern Blue Mountains as the abseil was well over 50 metres. Nic Bendeli was forced to get creative very quickly when he abseiled to the end of the rope. Then he had to get Eddie de Wilde, Mike Comfort, Meg McKone, Henry and me down the abseil. It was a hell of a trip. There was a lot of water. Henry and I sat in the spray of a waterfall for over an hour. We sang hymns to pass the time. Henry had blue lips from the cold.

*Ann Gibbs-Jordan*



# Within the Misty Mountains

## *The Monolith Valley Project*

This project grew out of the vision of Julie Andrew, the Club's Conservation Officer in 1987-88, with the assistance of Mike McGrath, at the Queanbeyan office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. With Greg Ellis as Club President, a notice of Motion in the April 1988 *it* by Julie, and Eddie De Wilde, proposed "...in an effort to focus NPWS management activity on rehabilitating severely eroded areas of the Budawang National Park" that the Club donate \$1000 to the NPWS specifically for the purpose of carrying out stabilisation work. An offer of volunteer labour was also made, to assist in the rehabilitation program. After the NSW Minister accepted these conditions, the financial donation was made in November 1988, when Anton Cook was President and Margot Simington was Conservation Officer. The CBC were keen for other user groups to be involved in the project, and this came about as the Canberra National Parks Association, the Milton National Parks Association and the Coastal and Mountain Walkers all carried out subsequent work in the Park.

Completion of the project involved at least 12 trips into the limestone cliffs of Monolith Valley. Sometimes as many as 26 club members were involved in these trips, which usually included at least 2 NPWS personnel. Recruiting and co-ordinating these numbers included passing a sheet round at Club meetings for expressions of interest in the next work weekend. All this occurred within a general culture of support and enthusiasm for the project by club members.

Reflecting back on the project, I see the faces and enthusiasm of those involved (some who have since left the club, some still active or not so active members)..... heaving great stumps of wood, setting them into mud or sand, driving iron pins into rock, as they set in place hundreds of wooden baffles which were intended to stabilise both well trodden paths and new paths bypassing sodden tea tree and swamp. I remember Saturday mornings waking to a chill mist in Long Gully and climbing Kalianna Ridge with great loads of



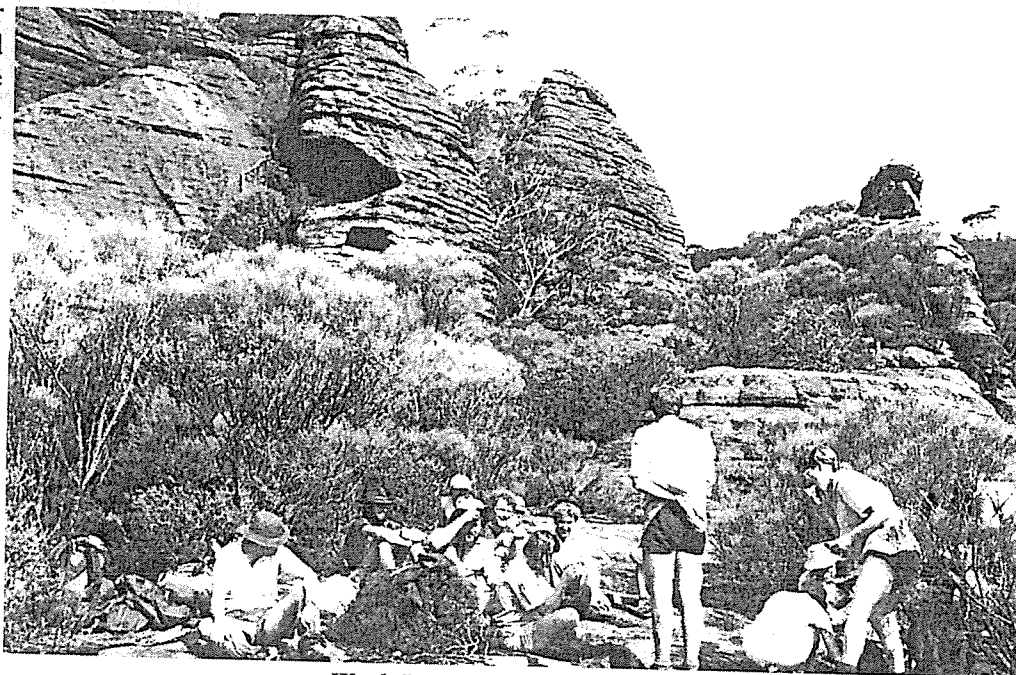
food and equipment. I remember our Saturday evening race against advancing darkness and evening rain to the campsite on Cooyoyo Creek, to the superb meals prepared by Margaret Cole, and the contents of a cask or two. There were also Sunday evenings when, arriving hot and bothered in Long Gully, there was the refreshing dive into the Yadboro River.

### **The project was divided into three stages**

#### **Stage One**

The work following the Club's initial donation extended from the chain out of Nibelung Pass, and the track stabilisation and re-routing to and including the bridge over the tributary between Mt Owen and Mt Mooryan, through a small copse of plumwood trees.

Anton Cook and David King accompanied the delivery in April by the NPWS helicopter of the necessary material. Much of this work, which involved most of the track re-routing carried out in the



*Work Party in Monolith Valley*

overall project, was completed in the weekend of 4-5 March 1989 by a party including 24 club members, plus some day visitors on Saturday who later headed off on their Sunday walk. This first stage was completed on 19-29 August by a party including 8 club members. This included setting up three Monolith Valley entrance signs at the Mt Mooryan-Mt Nibelung, Mt Cole-Donjon Mtn and Mt Cole Mt Owen entrances. (*By the way, the cost for the design of these entrance signs was donated by club member Doug Wright*). Some will recall carrying crowbar, pickaxe and shovels over Mt Cole in fading light, and the travelling along Nibelung Pass in pitch black, guided by a fluttering candle. A smaller party, that night we camped in the Castle saddle. In total, the club provided 70 working days.



## Stage Two

This work extends northwards from the bridge put in by the club in stage one, through the Green Room between Seven Gods Pinnacles and Mt Cole, and west between Mt Cole and Mt Donjon to the previously erected entrance sign. Funding for Stage two came from the Commonwealth's Heritage Assistance Program. The club's submission for \$2900 was made in the first week of September 1989. In writing up the submission, the estimated combined contribution from the club and the NPWS Ulladulla office to the project, was \$12 840. The first weekend work on this stage was May 4-5 1990.

Planning for the project was carried out over one weekend, while work was carried out over three weekends. All told, the club provided 102 working days, while input from the NPWS varied from two to four. Work by the club was greatly assisted by a very skilful NPWS helicopter pilot who delivered the first load of material and equipment in the Green Room. The only disruption to the work was when floods in northern NS meant that the NPWS helicopter was not available to fly in the second load of material and equipment by the end of August, so the final work weekend was deferred to October 26-27.

## Stage Three

The completion of stage two left a stretch extending east from the chain out of Nibelung Pass. To address this, in March 1991 the club under Allan Mikkelsen's presidency passed a motion to donate \$400 from the Conservation Fund to NPWS, for timber and associated material to be used in maintenance works over this untreated stretch. On 28-29 March 1992, a party of 18 carried out track stabilisation work over this final section. The final trip into the Monoliths was 6-8 November 1992, when a party of 5 club members along with Richard Green and his son Yadboro, carried out finishing work over the whole length of the project. This included clearing a plumwood tree that had peeled off the eastern wall of the Green Room and was blocking the path.

All told, the project extended over 5 years, from early 1988 to the end of 1992, involved at least four planning trips and at least 8 work weekends, totalled 214 working days, donations from the club of \$1400; a \$2900 grant; and the involvement of four club presidents.

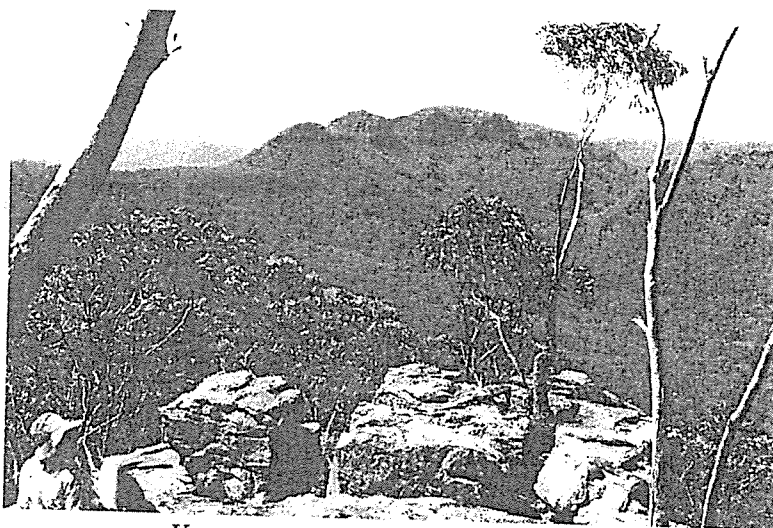
The Club membership and those who participated in this project have good reason to be proud of it. I am sure that the Seven Gods from their shrouded heights, have given their approval.

*David Campbell*

*Project Officer, Monolith Valley Project*

## CANBERRA BUSHIES IN THE BLUE BREAKS

The first view I ever had of the Blue Breaks was from the top of Mt Solitary, that imposing plateau which fills the horizon immediately to the south of the famous Echo Point Lookout. It was sometime in the mid 50's, and we had climbed to the cliff edge on the southern side of the mountain. I was bowled over by the sight of blue ranges stretching all the way to Kanangra Walls in the south west, and the jumble of ridges and cliffs in the southeast, lit up by the afternoon sun. I think what intrigued me most, however, was a long plateau edged by high golden cliffs, so similar in shape to Mt Solitary. I found out many years later that it was Vengeance Peninsula, and part of the region that was to become one of my favourite walking areas, the Blue Breaks.



*Vengeance Peninsula from Axeheads*

When we moved to Canberra at the end of 1973, the first social move we made was to join the Canberra Bushwalkers. I was pleased to find a group of walkers keen to do some of the more challenging walks in the Blue Mountains. The Blue Breaks, comprising the broken ridges and plateaus of the Tonalli Range and Lacys and Bimlow Tablelands, are actually more accessible from Canberra via the old mining town of Yerranderie than they are from Sydney.

Terry Jordan, bushwalker extraordinaire, had done several weekend trips from Kanangra Walls trying to reach Black Coola, a point on the Broken Rock Range which overlooks Lake Burragorang. Ann Gibbs-Jordan isn't sure that he ever quite made it, but since it's a round trip of about 70 km with some big ups and downs and "interesting" route finding on the way, it wouldn't be surprising if he hadn't.

My first walk in the Blue Breaks was one of the hardest I've ever done. One weekend in early September, 1974, Terry, Garry Medaris, Bob Harrison and I set out from Kanangra



Walls. We had morning tea on the Kowmung after descending Cambage Spire and lunch where the Scotts Main Range road crosses upper Butchers Ck. This left us the afternoon to climb onto the Axeheads from Byrnes Gap, traverse them and Vengeance Peninsula and descend to the junction of Bull Island Ck and Green Wattle Ck to camp.

In those days there were no tracks along the Axeheads, not even up Gander Head. We made our way along the narrow, two kilometre ridge, finding our own way up and down the cliff-edged tops. I remember one descent from a peak where we negotiated an overhang monkey style via a tree. By the time we were ready to turn east into Green Wattle Gap, I had drunk all my water and was feeling thirsty, so I was grateful to Bob for sharing his orange with me.

Here we had the most spectacular section of the whole trip - the great blocks of Vengeance Peninsula with their 100 metre sandstone cliffs. Despite being pressed for time, I found a few moments to marvel at the views of Cambage Spire, the deep rift of the Kowmung, the bumpy skyline of Cloudmaker and the Wild Dog Mountains, all the way north to Narrow Neck and Mt Solitary; and of the cliffs and stored water of the Burratorang Valley, Yerranderie Peak

By the time we reached the end of Vengeance Peninsula, our thirst was raging and evening fast approaching. We completed the steep descent to the junction in the dark. What relief to find a few pools of water in the creek and a flat campsite under towering blue gums! Next morning we were up at first light to ascend the Broken Rock Range, drop down to Grog Shop Bend on Butchers Ck and up again to Scotts Main Range, then over the Kowmung to grind up the 750 metres to Kanangra Walls.

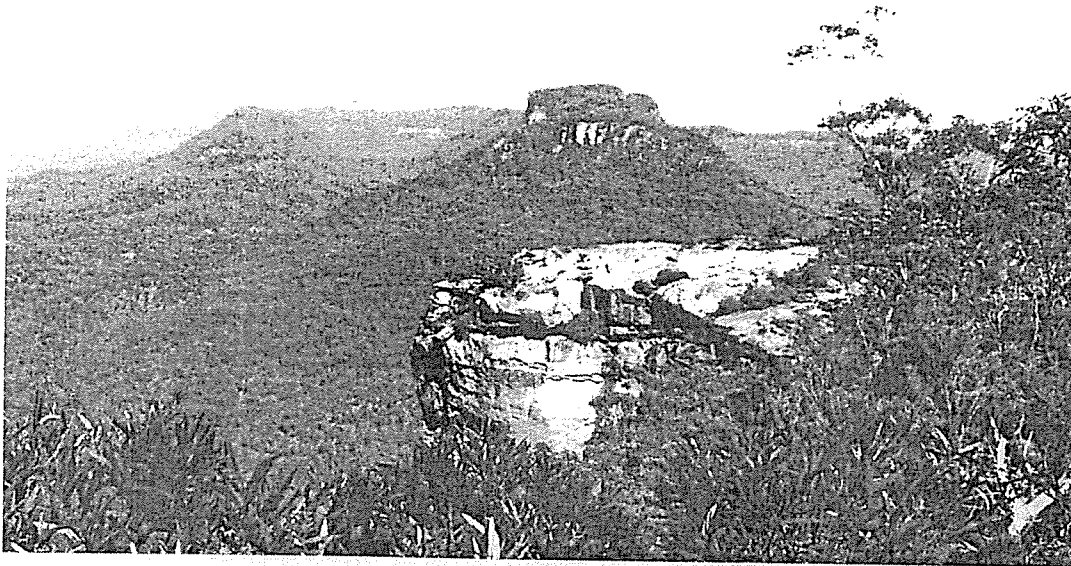
Three years later on the October long weekend, a large CBC party (including amongst others Terry, Ann, Sue and Alan Vidler, Henry Burmester, John and Ally Street, Rene Lays and myself) completed another epic on the fringes of the Blue Breaks. From Batsh Camp we descended Lannigans Ck to the Kowmung, then headed downstream through Bulga Dennis Canyon, and over Scotts Main Range to the Grog Shop on Butchers Creek where we found ourselves inadvertently trampling down a whole forest of greenhood orchids on the grassy banks. From here, half the party followed up Butchers Ck (rough and scrubby and never to be repeated), while the rest of us scrambled up the ultra steep slope to the Axeheads. We finally met at upper Butchers Ck the next morning, then returned to Batsh Camp via Mt Colong.

It was a trip of unusual interactions with creatures both human and animal. We had descended Acetylene Spur in the dark on Friday night to camp in Lannigans Creek. Early next morning, we were just sitting up in our sleeping bags when a group of men in boiler suits came leaping downstream and passed us without a word. Later, on the Kowmung, we saw them again.

“What club are you from?” I asked the man at the end of the line. “Corrective

Services”, was the terse reply. Suddenly we weren’t keen to prolong the conversation.

Terry, who must have taught Harry Butler a thing or two and was fond of finding lizards under rocks, decided he’d like to become more closely acquainted with their big brothers and picked up a large goanna. Now the main problem with picking up a goanna is getting rid it again. He ended up on top of an anthill,



*From Lacys Tableland to Vengeance Peninsula*

and round to Mt Colong on the southern arc. Most exciting of all was the metre-wide ridge near the beginning, where the cliffline, so solid in appearance from the distance, was revealed as the crumbling facade it really is, followed by the exposed climb to the highest section of the Peninsula. I vowed to return one day to enjoy it all at a more leisurely pace.



swinging the unfortunate reptile around his head and letting it go in the direction of John Street. But a wombat got back at him in Butchers Ck. Surprised when suddenly surrounded by a group of bushwalkers, it panicked and ran straight between Terry's legs.

In the late 80's and early 90's came a series of trips in the Axeheads/Lacys Tableland area. On one trip, Ann and I were practising our navigation skills in an attempt to lead the party out to Burragorang Peak over a 12 km stretch of winding, featureless ridges. In the rear was Ian Hickson, saying nothing as we conferred on our possible location. When we finally hit the cliffline, we were several kilometres back, near Tonalli Peak, and Ian proceeded to inform us exactly where we had gone wrong ten kilometres before.

One of the aims of many of these walks was to reach Black Coola from Yerranderie. They involved climbing up to the Broken Rock Range via either the Axeheads or Lacys and Green Wattle Creek, but even a four day trip wasn't long enough to get there. Finally we made it one Easter from Kanangra Walls, via Gingra Range and the Kowmung. I remember we had the most fantastic campsite on Butchers Creek, then set off the next morning to discover an even better one just round the corner.

Last Easter (April 2001) we were back in the Blue Breaks again, for a gloriously fine and sunny four days that reminded me of just what a fantastic walking area this is. To make things a bit easier, we had a base camp for two nights on Lacys, from which we walked out to a cliffline overlooking the spectacular cliffs of Lacys Ck with the waters of Lake Burragorang in the distance. The next day we had more stunning views from the western cliffs of Lacys (where Kim Hello managed to phone his wife in Canberra on his mobile!), and lovely groves of blue gums in Green Wattle Ck.

The last day provided a fitting finale with what must be the best day's bushwalking on the mainland of Australia - the magnificent walk across Vengeance Peninsula and the Axeheads back to Yerranderie. The only things missing were the wonderful spring flowers - sweet-scented boronia, glowing red waratahs, yellowy-bronze phebaliums, intriguing woody pears and a host of other flowering shrubs.

There are still lots of things I haven't done in the Blue Breaks and I hope I can find the energy for some of them before I finally hang up my sandshoes. I'll be truly sad when I can no longer walk in this remote and lovely area.

*Meg McKone*

## Pollies on Mt Kelly

In the 1960s and early 1970s many individuals and groups including the National Parks Association and the Canberra Bushwalking Club, the two major ACT conservation groups of the time, lobbied over many years to create a National Park in the southern ACT.

Late in 1975 well-known political events resulted in a Liberal government, and, for the 1<sup>st</sup> time, two local Liberal members, MHR John Haslem & Senator John Knight. Both were young, enthusiastic, and keen to try and create a niche in what was regarded as traditional Labour territory.

Dan Buchler, our Conservation Officer, wrote to John Haslem, who he knew through work contact years before, saying "*Congratulations on getting elected. When are you going to do something about creating a National Park in southern ACT?*" John replied along lines of "*Good to hear from you again. Lets meet so you can tell me about it.*" Dan quickly negotiated, with outcome as reported in June 1976 IT:

*"On Tuesday 25 May, Alan Vidler and Dan Buchler accepted an invitation to lunch with two A.C.T. parliamentarians, Senator Knight and Mr Haslem M.H.R. During the meeting local conservation issues such as Kelly-Gudgenby, Ainslie-Majura, and Mt Taylor were discussed"*

[I was CBC President; "Kelly-Gudgenby" was the proposed National Park - The name "Namadgi" was not in use then, at least not by us]

At the lunch, in the Parliament House Members dining room, discussions were as reported. Messrs Haslem & Knight had obviously done their homework and asked many detailed questions. At the end, Dan said "*Well, now that we've told you about the area, would you like to spend a weekend walking there as guests of Canberra Bushwalking Club?*" I pretended it was something we'd discussed beforehand. Conversation then went something like:

JH: "*Thanks but no thanks*".

JK: "*Gosh, I'd love to*"

JH: "*Huh! You would? Oh well, I guess in that case I'd also like to go*"

We agreed that due to Parliamentary and weather constraints the trip would not take place until November.

Over the next few months, we planned the trip in great detail. Walks Sec Gary Medaris, expert on the area, selected the route; Dan kept 'in touch' with JH & JK; various people loaned suitable gear for the guests. To keep the party both manageable in size and with sufficient 'strength' to carry the gear for three novice guests - JK's wife Carla also came, we, after much discussion, decided on a selected "representative party" rather than a normal open bookings arrangement. This caused some unhappiness later, even though all people who specifically



asked to come were included, but most accepted that this was the only realistic approach.

The weekend finally arrived, with much attention from the local Press. Participants *{to be checked in Visitor's centre copy of page from Kelly logbook}*: John & Carla Knight; John Haslem; Alan & Sue Vidler; Russ & Jenny Bauer; Dan Buchler; Gary Medaris; Wendy Davidson (President from 9/96); Harry Black, then our only active Life Member; Greg Scott, at 18 our youngest active weekend walker; Fred George, our oldest active weekend walker, born 1910 but 69 for the occasion; Bob Harrison; Rene Lays and Reet Vallak. We gave each guest a daypack, an oilskin, a water bottle, a map with the route marked on it, and a compass. Other gear was divided among the rest of us - except for Fred, to his disgust, but we decided that would be too embarrassing for the guests, less than half his age. We arranged access through the locked gate at Orroral.



*Senator Knight and Mr Haslem with CBC on Mt Kelly*

Most of the party were dropped at the turn-off to Cotter Gap. They started walking while drivers returned cars to the Nursery Swamp access point. We caught up shortly before Little Creamy Flat. The route followed the (then) faint pad to Cotter Gap; bush to Pond Creek and fire trail to LCF.

After lunch at LCF (various of the above still have photos of pollies flat on their backs...) we went over Namadgi, then known by us as Myrtle, looked at the aboriginal rock arrangements, then descended to camp at Rotten Swamp.

Camp that night was jovial, with much serious lobbying and strong interest by guests. There was also considerable friendly rubbishing, both ways. A couple of conversation snippets spring to mind:

XX: "You're not a bad fellow John. Too bad you are only there for one term"

JH: "Probably, but I really enjoy the job. I feel I can really make a contribution to Canberra. I'd do anything to stay on longer"

YY: "How about resigning and seeking pre-selection for the Labour Party?"

JH: "Err. Almost anything..."

And:



JH: "Gosh Senator, think of the potential of this area. We could put a road up through there (Middle Creek), an exclusive housing development over there (Mt. Namadgi), a caravan park here..."

JK: "Right on John. This could really give us some good publicity"

Greg Scott: (194cm tall, strong basso profundo voice, now in Australian Opera Co) "Gee, I hope you guys know the way home"

After a night of intermittent rain, most of us, including JH and JK, climbed Kelly. One conversation on the way up:

JH: "Hey Senator, I bet you'll be the first member of the Geriatric Club {the Senate} up this mountain"

JK: "Yes - can't see anyone else among that lot getting up here"

DB: "Before you two get too proud of yourselves, a 69 year old has been waiting on top for you for the last 20 minutes"

The return route was via Middle Creek, Big Creamy Flat, Mavis Ridge, Rendezvous and Nursery Creeks. JH surprised by going much better than JH, a current top-level squash player and fairly recent ACT representative Rugby Union player. On top of Mavis Ridge JH surprised Gary M, and the rest of us, with: "Aren't we going wrong here? According to the route you've marked on my map, I think we should be heading down the ridge a couple of hundred metres north". Gary flashed back: "I decided this one might be a bit clearer". It transpired that JH in younger days was a Rover Scout. He had initially declined DB's invitation as he knew what he'd be letting himself in for!

Everyone, particularly three very tired guests, was glad to get back to the cars having completed what was emphatically a L/R weekend trip, even with the lesser scrub in the area prior to the 1983 fires. When Sue and I dropped the Knights home we had to help Carla out of the car, as she'd frozen into position, and John was not much better! JK was later reported to have stated it was one of the great experiences of his life, but not one to be repeated!

To me, it was a revelation into the political process. Both, as inexperienced MPs "in power", clearly worked closely and harmoniously with experienced Opposition local members Fry & Ryan, swapping "how to" help for "ministerial access" - but spent their last hour or two walking composing a Press statement like "We went deep into the wilderness and saw prints going even deeper, but did not follow them as we realised they were made by the Labour party..."

Did the trip help? Both worked hard on the issue subsequently, both publicly and behind the scenes. When the Namadgi National Park was created in 1978 a couple of experienced NPA campaigners opined that our trip had brought forward the event by at least 18 months.

*Alan Vidler & Dan Buchler*



## CYCLE TOURING

The best way to experience the bush is on foot but a minority of CBC members periodically take to bikes to widen their horizons.

Significant rides undertaken by the Club during the past decade include a three-day tour in January 1991 when three of us set out from Adaminaby and pedalled to Kiandra and Cabramurra before branching off onto the scenic, but bumpy, Happy Jacks Road. After traversing a deep valley and high plains, the road swept down to Eucumbene Dam before linking with the route back to Adaminaby.

Also in 1991, a party led by Rosemarie Pretty and Roger Edwards bundled their bikes into the train for a Club trip to Bundanoon, then rode back to Canberra via Tarago and Bungendore over a period of several days. During Easter 1993, a group of seven under the same leadership repeated the journey, distinguishing themselves by doing all their cooking on a single Trangia.

Another Pretty-Edwards initiative was an ambitious trip along the coast road from Adelaide to Melbourne during the heat of summer in 1992. Contrary to meteorological expectations, a howling headwind greeted the party of five as they rode past the lagoons of the Coorong, followed by torrential rain as they traversed the beautiful coastline of Port Campbell National Park. Tall mountain forests and verdant gullies in the Otways provided a backdrop to enjoyable cycling before they took the ferry across the Heads of Port Phillip Bay and rode the last leg to Frankston.

During Easter 1992 I circum-cycled the Snowies, without having persuaded any other Club members that this would be a fun way to spend the four-day weekend. I set out from Sawpit Creek and took the Happy Jacks road across the hills, then the highway to Khancoban and Swampy Plains River. After a night at the river crossing, I backtracked and rode up the scenic dirt road past the Geehi Reservoir to Schlink Pass before scooting down to Muryang Power Station with a roaring northwester behind me.

Nearer home, the Brindabellas have in the past provided some good day and weekend rides. Cyclists have occasionally met up with Club walking parties, such as two of us did in December 1994 at a campsite on the NSW side of Yaouk Gap. We arrived there after taking the steep mountain track (now closed) over Murray's Gap to Oldfields Hut and then Mt Morgan.

In January-February 1994 the Edwards pair were again off on one of their long-distance ventures, this

time in New Zealand. The journey began at the (almost) northern most point of North Island and ended just outside Wellington - a distance of 1427km. Ken Moylan accompanied the other two for most of the way. Overnighing mainly in pubs and motor camps, the group made their way via Whangarei, Auckland, Coromandel Peninsular, the Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Wanganui and Featherston. Big hills and pouring rain were the main obstacles encountered in the Land of the Long White Cloud but its hot puddles provided welcome respite from the rigours of the road.

In 1996 the Club organised a magnificent feast at Wee Jasper, providing an opportunity for seven cyclists to sharpen their appetites on the ups and downs of Sawyers Road on the way to the dinner venue and campsite.

Also in 1996, Chris Reid led a weekend ride that was supposed to join up with the Club's Winter Solstice celebration at Brandy Flat Hut. To make it interesting, we set off on Saturday and took the dirt road up Naas Creek to Mt Clear, where we camped the night. Apart from innumerable stream crossings and a broken chain, the trip went well up to this point. That night we crept into our tents beneath a frosty moon but awoke to bucketing rain. The ride back to Canberra turned into a fight against the freezing elements, with all thoughts of feasting at Brandy Flat forgotten.

Some of the best cycle touring routes through the Brindabellas have now been closed to bikes but there are still plenty of areas worth a visit in the ACT and nearby coastal regions. A particularly unforgettable tour was in April 1996 when John Haydon, Grahame Muller and I set out to ride via Captains Flat to Wadbilliga National Park and then Cobargo and Lake Wallaga. Ominous clouds persuaded John to head back home on the first day out and then the state of Grahame's knees caused him to abandon as well. We were not helped by the freezing weather, which dumped a layer of snow on the stony forest road near Pike's Saddle. I continued on my own to Wallaga Lake and then headed down the coast via Nadgee, where I camped two nights in blissful solitude at Newton's Beach. Then it was back on the bike for the journey to Murrumbidgee, Cape Conran and Marlo. There I was joined by Chris Reid and the pair of us rode through Orbost, Buchan, Suggan Buggan and the Snowy River Valley to Jindabyne. We ascended Mt Kosciuszko in mild autumn sunshine before going on to Adaminaby and back to Canberra via the lonely Tantangara Road, Oldfield's Hut and the Brindabellas. The total distance was 1300km.

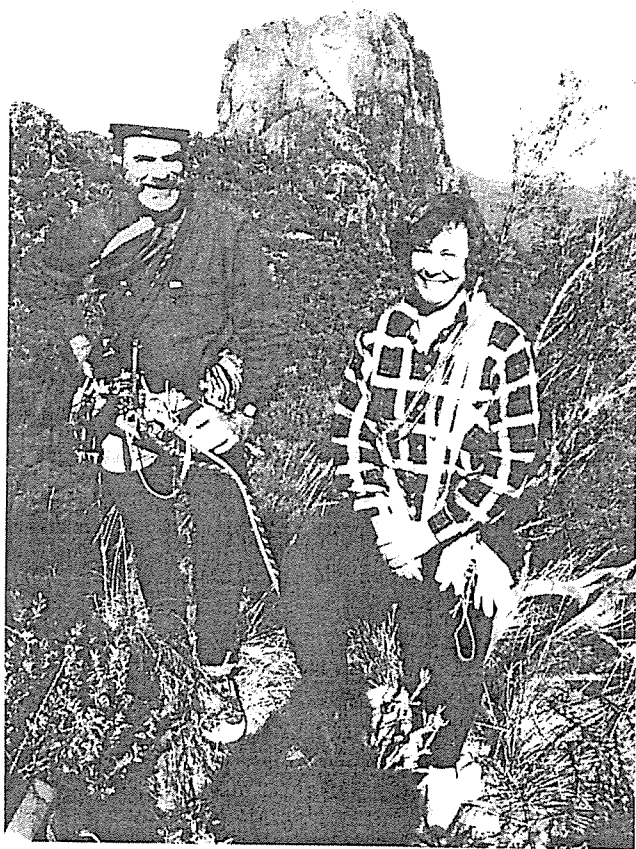
John P'Ons



## ROCK CLIMBING

Over the past decade or so a small number of active climbers in the Club, including Nic Bendeli, Dave Drohan, Grahame Muller, Meg McKone, Eric Sadlowski and myself, have organised climbing meets at local cliffs as well as expeditions to more distant places. Booroomba Rocks is the most popular climbing venue in the ACT but Gibraltar Peak and outcrops on Orroral Ridge also provide some challenging granite. Often a primary objective of Club climbing meets has been to provide instruction to help walkers deal with scrambles and abseils.

Donjon, in the Budawangs, has been climbed by Club members on a number of occasions and those with a head for verticality have sampled the delights of the Blue Mountains, including old favourites at Narrowneck and the West Wall of the Tree Sisters. In 1991 the Club suffered a sad loss with the death of Tessa Segrave in a fall on Wedding Cake Mountain.



*John I'Ons and Meg McKone in Warrumbungles*

Further afield, the Warrumbungles have long, exposed climbs on volcanic cliffs and spires in enchanting surroundings. A number of routes in the area have been done on private trips by



members, including Stan Mulvany and others in the 1970's. In June 1990 a Club party consisting of Ann Gibbs-Jordan, Meg McKone and myself climbed an historical route in the area - Dr Dark's Chimney on Belougery Spire. After reaching the summit in perfect weather conditions, we gazed out over the surrounding hills and volcanic towers to the never-ending plains beyond. A scene of awesome tranquility.

Two years later, a different threesome were back in the Warrumbungles to tackle Cornerstone Rib on Crater Bluff. Ick Hempton, Grahame Muller and I first warmed up on Dr Dark's Chimney and Vertigo, the latter a particularly delightful route, on Belougery Spire. Early the following day we set out for Crater Bluff but succeeded in making a classic stuff-up of the walk in, with the result that we only reached the base of the rock at 10am. The first two climbing pitches were easy, but after that the leading all fell to Ick, the youngest and most competent member of the party, while Grahame and I took a lot of deep breaths. The eucalypts below shrank to bonsai proportions as we picked our way delicately up the soaring arete, at times only a couple of metres wide. After reaching the summit at 3.30pm, we hurriedly began the descent but darkness enveloped us well before we had reached the path back to camp where Grahame's wife, Maureen, waited anxiously. A koala provided relief by scrambling up a tree in the light of the fire while we ate our belated dinner.

The challenge of leading Cornerstone Rib ourselves proved too great for Grahame and I so June 1994 saw us back in the Warrumbungles, this time with Ruth Thomson and Nick Clarke. We had the approach route sorted out and started climbing at 9am. After a magnificent day we were back under the trees at a very dry Camp Hurley just as darkness fell. This time the wildlife consisted of a wallaby which persistently stuck its nose into the dishes.

Usually the main problem in the Warrumbungles is lack of water, but this wasn't the case in June 1999. From a soggy camp in the southern section of the park, Eric Sadlowski and I climbed an easy route on an outlying peak, Tonduron. After days of rain, the creeks in the area were running strongly and the rock was lichenous and slippery. We got down just before the next shower arrived.

*John I'Ons*

## LEADERS

'Is George Carter a person'? These perceptive words were asked by a very new member who, on hearing a description of the walks she might do with the Club, thought that a 'George Carter walk' might be a metaphorical reference to a legendary figure from Club history or perhaps a mythical figure long lost in the mists of bushwalking lore. Either way, it would be a type of walk rather than one led by a Mr Carter himself. Almost all of the above, she was told.

George is one of only nine people to have led more than 100 walks for the club. All of them until about a year ago were still walking with us. Chris Leslie (whose walks normally carried an 'R' for 'rough' rating) and David Truman (master of the long march), have recently left Canberra. Since it was founded, 481 people have lead at least five walks. 25 people have led more than 50.

Our most capped leader is Alan Vidler who lives and breathes bushwalking. He led his first walk for this club in 1973 and has averaged ten walks a year for each of the 28 years since. He is a club life member and deserves it on that basis alone. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Alan's 283 walks, led or co-led, were overnights.



*Allan Mikkelsen Supporting a Tree*

Also in the 200-plus category are Allan Mikkelsen (210) and Jeff Bennetts (207). After being introduced to the club by Alan Vidler, Allan started leading walks in 1988. Since he leads mostly day walks, I have been on many of his walks, especially his Wednesday ones, which are a good release valve for hassled

bureaucrats. He has a great appreciation of the beauty of the places where we walk and is a good leader to have when anything goes wrong.

Jeff led the second walk I did. It was my introduction to the Morton National Park, on that day, the Byangee Walls. I keep an eye out for his walks to the Budawangs and recommend them to anyone who wants to see this remarkable and beautiful area. He has been leading walks since 1976.

Vance Brown (174) is next. Vance was a fish in an earlier life and is probably the club expert on the Shoalhaven Gorge. Another club life member, he has been leading walks for us since 1982.

George Carter (154), Richard Bain (145) and Terence Uren (115) are the others. Richard introduced me to the Nattai Gorge and is well known for interesting walks. I was on Terence's 100<sup>th</sup> walk, on a weekend in 1999 which included Little Forest Plateau and Durras Lake.



*Janet Edstein*

Our most capped female leader is Janet Edstein with over 70 walks, led or co-led. Janet was President when I joined the club and I did many walks with her in those early days (for me). It was she who encouraged me to start leading walks myself.

Not everyone in the club wants to lead walks but the club can only function through the efforts of its leaders. The amount of effort involved in leading walks is considerable. Thanks particularly to these leaders.

*Stan Marks*



## A Walking Tour of 70 Kosciuszko Huts

In 1997 after a walk from Thredbo to the Orroral Valley I decided to investigate visiting and photographing all the Kosciuszko and Namadgi huts, so I found a tourist map of the park which showed most of the huts, marked in the missing ones and then decided on a sequence of loop walks to visit them. Some of the huts are not marked on the maps but most are listed in the KHA hut list, which is partly reproduced in Klaus Huenecke's book 'Huts of the High Country' and in Charles Warner's 'Bushwalking in Kosciuszko National Park'. Having to retrieve the remains of a food dump at Dunns hill, my 5 year old son and I did Four-Mile at the end of May. We started walking at Mt Selwyn, and were warned by some workers at the ski-village that it was a dangerous time of year with very cold weather. Sure enough there was a heavy frost that night, but we were back at the car by noon the next day.

Next spring we did Seamans and Cootapatamba Huts in October, enjoying the deep drifts of spring snow & bright sunshine. I also led a CBC trip into an Oldfields Hut (also known as "The Banks") high above the Naas River in Namadgi. This hut is not shown on most maps.

In December on an overnight walk on the Tantangara plain we visited Hains, Witzes and Gooandra homesteads. Highlights of this walk were brumbies and brumby tracks, which we found made great walking tracks, and thunder and hail storms. See IT March 1998 for further details of this walk.

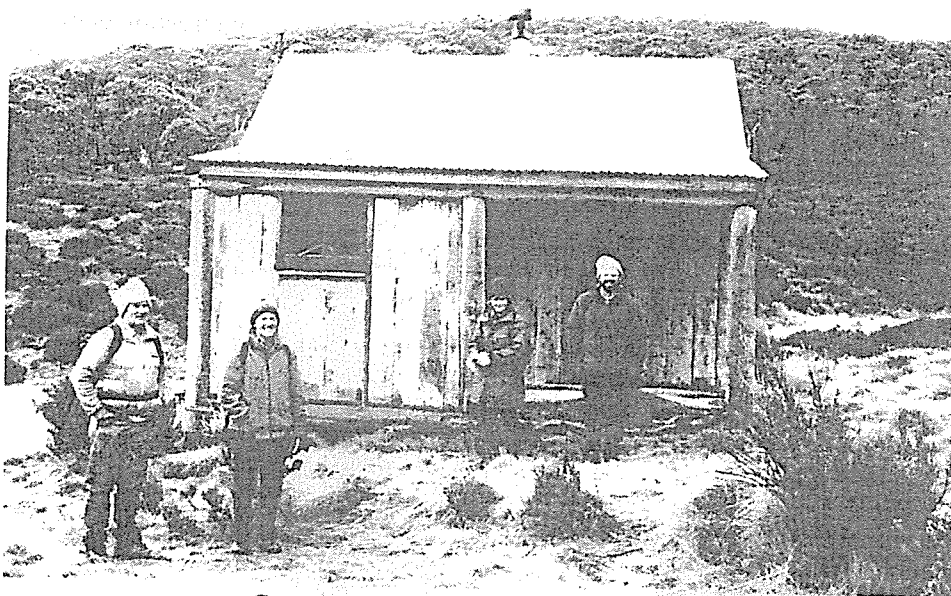
Feb 98 found us on the popular walk past Patons Hut and up the Pretty Plain along the Dargals fire trail. We found Toolong ruins at GR 160074 on the east of the road complete with red-bellied snake under corrugated iron, and picked up the old bridle track just before it crosses the Tooma River at GR 153027. This old track is on the true right bank of Tooma River and is much shorter than following Hell Hole road.

(For further details, see Warner's book.) As we neared Pretty Plain Hut the leader jumped over a tiger snake before realizing it was on



the track, and as we arrived we watched a red-bellied black slither under the hut. On the return from Pretty Plain it is possible to reach Wheelers without a lengthy walk back up the road by going down one of the gullies near GR143020, however one member of our party had developed bad blisters so we missed Wheelers.

A walk scheduled for March 98 to Tantangara Hut and the Long Plain was cancelled with no starters, but a private walk a month later with some club members saw us at Adaminaby ringing the owner of Gooandra cabins, as there was bad weather coming. Sure enough that night it snowed, and next day we did Tantangara Mountain and Hut as a day walk, with snow delineating the brumby tracks around the mountain. We took the



*Constances Hut on the Burrungubugge*

bridle track that starts at GR 392267 and followed an old telegraph line up through alpine ash. Tantangara Mountain is honeycombed with such tracks, and has inspired a friend to lead many walks in the area along the brumby tracks, as they are never steep, and connect grassy clearings with open ridges, together with the delight of not knowing where they will lead.

Easter that year we visited Linesman #3, Brooks, Boobee, Happy Jacks Plain, Mackeys and Round Mountain Huts, the walks first three days being fine but the last so cold and wet one party member had to be helped to get their balaclava out of their pack as they were too cold to move their hands! My camera was so wet the photos of Round Mountain Hut were ruined.

In April 98 we started on the Burrungubugge past the new Constance's Hut, where we had lunch while a shower went through. The rain stopped so we started up an increasingly vague track through very wet daisy

bush to Kidmans Hut. We soon were drying out by the fire, and that night there was 4 cm of snow. One walker from Darwin had never seen the white stuff before and wondered what was crushing his tent! Next day was fine, sunny and a strong wind was blowing from the west, but the snow was cold and dry, and we crossed the snow covered sphagnum to Brassy Gap where we found a small cairn and the wagon track down through the dripping forest onto the Gungahlin. The party was well pleased to be out of the snow!

At about this time we heard the noise of a plane in the distance. We found a brumby track that headed in the direction of Davies Hut, had lunch on its well renovated verandah, then walked cross country past Heggies Hut ruins and then the power line road back to the cars. On return to Canberra we heard that a plane had crashed due to ice forming on the wings when it attempted to cross the Great Divide that day, killing all aboard.

In September 98 we did the Gulf & Nungar plains on the Murrumbidgee below Tantangara dam. The river here does a large S bend as it crosses the Gulf Plain, and after started at the seasonally locked gate by the dam, we had to cross the river twice to reach Townshend Hut, then again to follow brumby tracks to Pedens Hut. Despite being fully dammed it was flowing well, mainly due to Gulf Creek. Pedens has a fine view of Half Moon peak, which I would climb three years later. We then turned back south enjoying the tracks across the Gulf plain complete with small sinkholes, stopping briefly at Circuits Hut, also very extensively renovated. It even boasts two toilets and a kero fridge. A further 4km on we reached Schofields Hut, obviously well used, with fresh kindling on the outdoors fireplace under a large piece of iron and 4WD tracks heading off in various directions. In the hut were two new mattresses, one commandeered by the leader. Next day we hit the Nungar plain, crossing Nungar Creek and then across to Brayshaw's Hut, a tiny hut which used to have a small stove. From there we followed tracks to New Hut ruin, over a small hill and found Gavells Hut, a delightful hut nestling on the southern edge of Nungar plain. From there we picked up a brumby track over a 1600m hill which afforded views of the Scabby ranges, then we had a short walk down to the saddle to the other car.

A month later saw a nearly identical party start at the gate at Gurrangorambla Creek on the Currango

plain. Another CBC party was starting off at the same spot, heading for Mt Bimberi. We stayed together till Oldfields Hut where having got my photos we headed back up the road and then down a side track and into the bush, across Pockets Creek and thence to Pockets Hut. After some lunch we cut across Seventeen Flat with rain coming behind us. We left the road before Blue waterholes, inspected a copper mine then crossed Cave Creek negotiating the gorge successfully, or so I thought - one member of the party pulled a muscle on the descent. Luckily it was not too serious, and the rain stopped. We headed past sinkholes reaching the road as a 4WD passed us- he was just driving up the road with his chainsaw to get wood for his camp at the creek. We reached Coolamine homestead, and we hung out our packs to dry. The homestead is not open for camping,



*Coolamine Homestead*

but there was a party of students staying in one hut. We camped nearby. In the morning there was a fog-bow and I completed photographing the hut occupied by the sleeping students, disturbing them with my flashing! We headed over the hill SW crossing Cave Creek again at an easy spot, passing Harris Waterhole and finding a creek issuing from a limestone cliff. With the injured member of our party on the road we were able to walk 100m off the road and parallel, the better to view the open country, dotted with limestone features. Bill Jones Hut now has an aggregate floor presumably to discourage campers. The Mosquito Creek fire trail then passes through the Blue Waterhole Saddle, a dramatic cut in the Gurrangorambla range. A creek must have cut the gap in the past, and then river capture caused it to dry up. Soon we left the trail and struck past a pinus radiata wilding!!! across a bog and to Old Currango, painted a bright pink. Some young swallows were sitting over the fire place. From behind the hut there is a magnificent view of the Currango plain and the Bimberi range. From



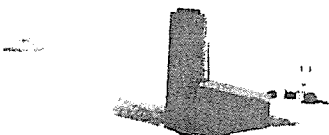
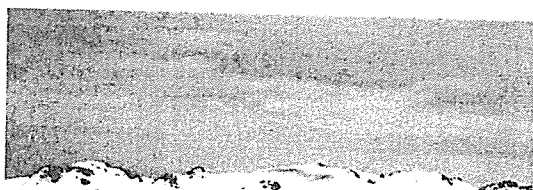


there we struck across the Currango plain which we found easy walking with no more bogs, the leader having a quick dip in the aqueduct from the Goodradigbee, and we reached our cars just as the other CBC party did.

In March 2001, Australia Post having lost my slides of Oldfields and Pockets Huts, and finding out that the hut known as Oldfields #2 or 'Love Nest in the Sallees' wasn't burnt down, we parked a car at the Gurrangorambla gate again and drove back to the Currango turnoff. From there a pony track heads SE, past a pine wilding, down the hill meeting the Murrumbidgee fire trail. From there Oldfields #2 is only a few hundred metres. This hut, not being shown on the map, gets very few visitors and has some of the original tins and junk dating from the grazing times. After lunch, photos of the hut and people on the bed we crossed Paytens Creek and toiled up Half Moon peak, the Clear Ridge marked on the map in fact having low but tiring alpine vegetation, but the view of Morgan and the Kosciuszko Park is excellent. We swiftly descended and camped in the forest by Paytens Creek. Next day we went through the saddle at GR 603 458 picking up the pony track that ascends Mt Morgan, past a spruce wilding and down the fittingly named Lone Pine trail to Oldfields. From there we headed north to the weir on the river and followed the aqueduct road around through a mini-gorge on the Goodradigbee and thence to Pockets Hut. From there the car awaited at the gate, with only a copperhead snake to surprise us hiding on the road out of the wind.

Currently I still have 14 huts to visit, namely Boltons, Boltons Hill, Botherum Plain, Cesjacks, Cooinbil, Grey Hill Cafe, Hainsworth, Happys, Long Plain, Mawson, Millers, Tin, Vickerys and Wheelers, having visited another 22 huts on private trips.

### *Murray Dow*



*Cootapatamba Hut in the snow*



## Recollections from the Alpine Walking Track

At a personal level on such a long journey the images remembered are those of bush traversed, one's companions, best days' challenges, rivers and campsites. One remembers the usual hassles...bush flies and March flies...sometimes it was too hot, or too cold, too scrubby or awkward under foot; the long hauls up to some top...is this is this not the route?.....and so on.

I nearly trod on that snake and it escaped between my legs. Morale was usually good but towards the end I had to point out to my companions that the creak that they heard when I bent over was my pack, not my muscles and bones. And I doubted the mental health of one person saying that the track was so good that it was an effort to keep his mind on the walking. Another was concerned about the widespread effect of lactic acid on his body, and we concluded that it had certainly got to his brain.

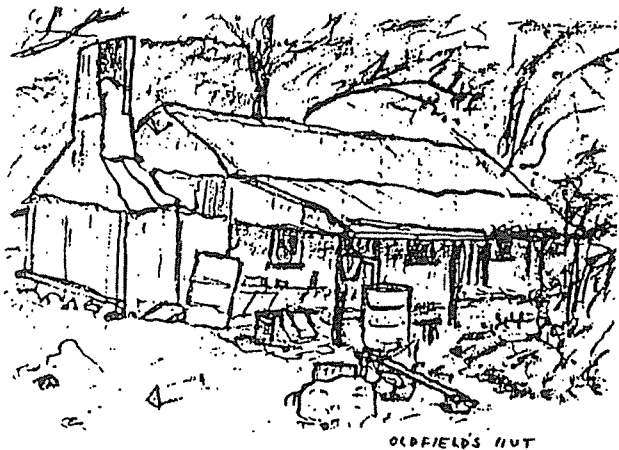
Without doubt I'd go back to Walhalla. I could spend a few more weeks in the Howitt area too. We met a few parties on the Cross Cut Saw and Mt Speculation; one party was retracing their steps due to not getting the route off the Viking. Ours on that feature was a memorable day. The difficulty was proving the way off the end of it and along to the Barry Saddle. It took time but it was worth it, not to be trapped half way down between the bluffs. As the guide book said, Buckwong Creek was an idyllic campsite. Raw gravel fire trails remain a pain in my brain. There were many breath-taking panoramas. Familiarity with the view- that one had actually walked on that far peak- gave one a sense of possession.

Most of the trees seemed to be Snowgum, Mountain Ash or Black Sallee, but scrub and grassed areas were more varied. The fauna sighted was wide ranging: Tiger, Copperhead, Brown and Whitelipped snakes; birds- persistently calling Pardalotes, Robins, Rufous Whistlers, Black Cockatoos, Gang Gangs, Rosellas, a Tawny Frogmouth, Falcons, Wrens, and Wood Duck all come to mind; wallabies, kangaroos and emus; many brumbies, cattle, goats, two tethered camels and pigs, crayfish and trout; and the odd human.

Companionship was valued, lightening the task, revitalising the day...the intangibles of friendship. Discussions were wide-ranging; the blister on her big toe and the courage needed to prick it and dry it out with metho; conservation issues: all a big waste of time if this lot goes up in flames this summer; Religion and the Rise of Capitalism; Zionism and the principle of the Diaspora; being cloud-bound at night in 1945,

over England in a bomber running out of fuel; stitches versus sticking plaster; hypotheses about March flies' lives without the proximity of mammals; water input, sweat, effort and urine....a companion's Coy. patrol in SVN in 1970.....

On Christmas Day we were at Taylor's Crossing on the Mitta Mitta River. This was a beautiful, cool, clear, swift-running, pure river...the more so after seven km of raw gravel fire trail to get there. A grassed area lies either side of the suspension bridge. The wild apples came from a tree up the road and the giant crayfish took forty minutes to catch and was delicious eating. Stewed green apples with dumplings were also most tasty. Our rendezvous came in the next day with even more food, much of it fresh, and the writer over-ate, and felt stuffed - unpleasantly so.



Our pig incident was unique. Three lads from South Australia joined us for the Kosciuszko stage - terrific fellows all three. They'd read about the Jagungal pigs; they wanted to see, hunt and eat pig! Each had a hundred dollar pocket knife to support the discussion. Being the nominal "experienced bushie" I assured the boys that they'd see plenty of signs, maybe the odd herd at a distance, but they'd be lucky to get near enough to use their knives.

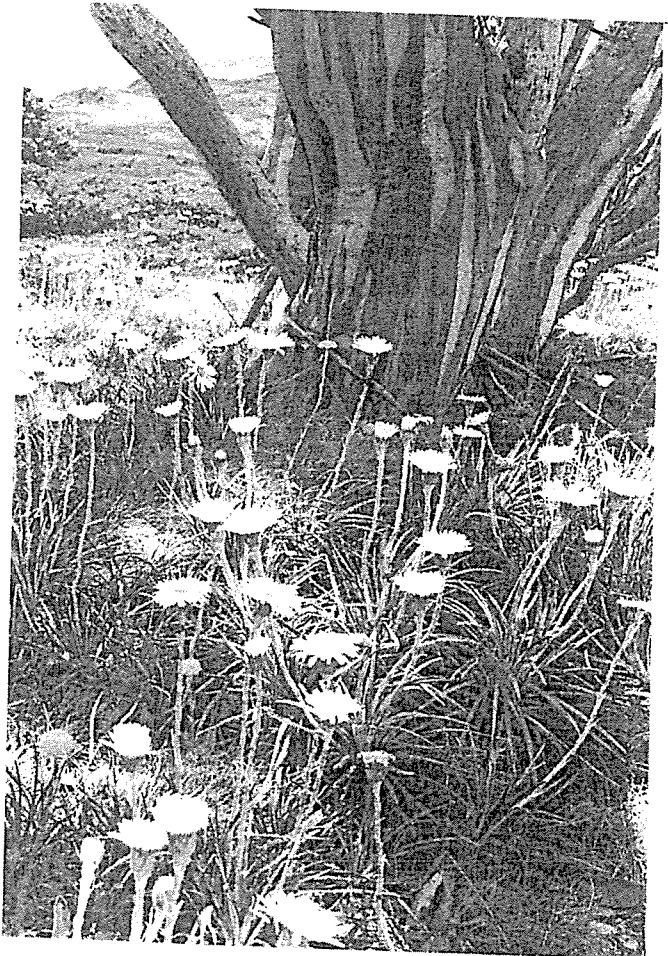
***My wisdom was short-lived.***

Contact front! Five enemy pigs. Rambo Adrian initiated contact, dropping his pack and running at great speed to secure one monstrous piglet. Blood and guts Adam - the fastest blade in the South-West - dispatched this enemy forthwith; it did not die valiantly, but squealed like a stuck pig. The remaining enemy which probably included Ma and Pa pigs, were nowhere to be seen. The two hunters were ecstatic and posed for their camera. The fearless leader (squeamish about such matters) observed the action from forty metres, and closed to discuss strategies for dealing

with a counter attack, viz: Ma and Pa pig looking for murdered progeny. Things could be sharp and cutting if we weren't quick enough climbing trees.

The pig was gutted and later skinned and inspected to discount meat problems - fluke and worms. That afternoon at O'Keefe's Hut we set up a rotisserie, taking some three hours to cook it, all the time basting it with honey. There was meat enough on it to feed a family of five for a week. The fearless leader had a sample but declined too much- too gamey in taste. Our three lads ate the lot that evening; that they had room enough in their stomachs for it seemed an impossibility. Next morning, showering at the small waterfall at the bottom of Hut Creek, they sighted the remainder of the family, maybe, but no chase; we had to head off to our next map spot.

***Rob Horsfield***



*Alpine Daisies*





BUCKENBOWRA RIVER • CORN TRAIL • NSW

1 APRIL 2001

*A sketch by Cynthia Breheny*

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