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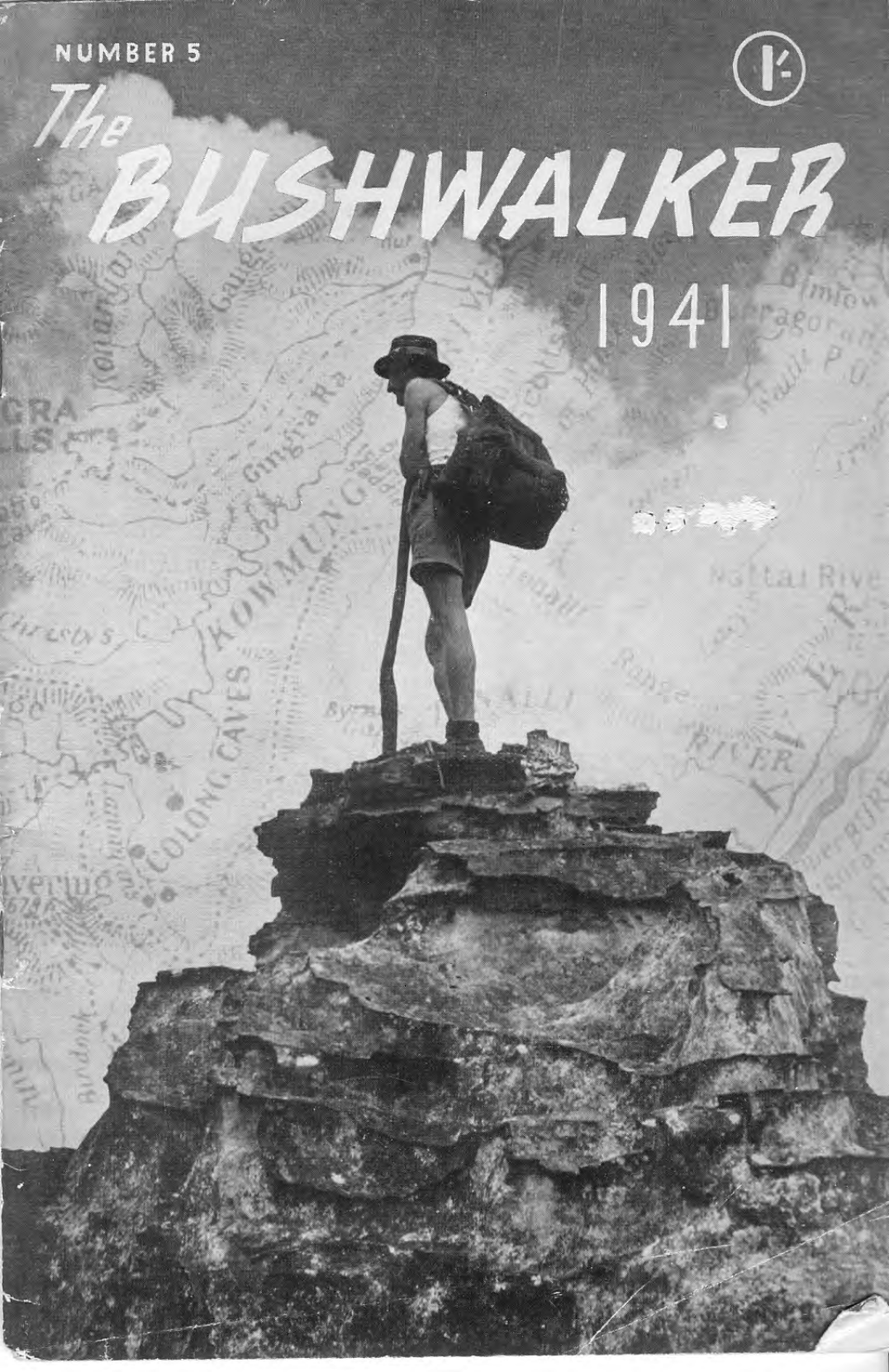
The BUSHWALKER

1941



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The Bushwalker

No. 5 1941

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(See page 27.) COLO RIVER. (Photo. by E. Watts.)

The Bushwalker

EDITORIAL.

As the third year of war's mighty conflict rolls on we see signs of patriotic fervour all around us. Patriotism is far from dead in this fine country of ours ; it flourishes now as never before. And yet the conscience of the nation is not yet fully awake ; we have pressing problems to solve if the future of Australia is to be safeguarded. This does not imply any "new order" ; rather, in the sense in which we refer, it requires the maintenance of the status quo, the conservation of resources, soil, forests, minerals, flora, fauna. These are the inexorable problems of the future.

This nation has much to preserve and much to lose. It is not like the old world, where the needs of countless centuries of civilization have failed to upset the balance of nature and precautionary measures for conservation are unnecessary. Here, after one hundred and fifty years of settlement, we have no record of progress of which we can be proud ; on all sides the toll of industry and money-making has left but little equity in our natural resources. The foremost of the problems which now face Australia were stated by an eminent scientist to be "erosion and soil drift, the reckless cutting and burning of irreplacable timber, the apparently inevitable decay of Australia's unique fauna in competition with introduced animals and with the tide of human settlement ; the need for real national parks, if something unique is not to disappear from the world." These are not new to us ! Their imminence has been obvious for years past, but the urge for exploitation has overborne all considerations of conservation, and political expediency has not permitted the adoption of the requisite long range policy.

We carelessly permit the frenzied exploitation of our national assets ; and can we truthfully deny Brian Penton's recent stricture that Australia is only a field for the exploiter ? Or to quote his comment, "Isn't that how we really look upon Australia—a place to exploit ? Surely nobody would say we have any conscience about the land itself ! Anyone can cut down its trees, waste its thin, precious soil, its thin, precious rivers. Who protests ? Who wins an election on the issue ? Grab what you can while the grabbing's good ! Isn't that our motto ?" Surely this is only the result of a narrow, colonial outlook nurtured by the failure of Australians to get a national consciousness, a national credo, a sense of their own identity, a sense of independence and responsibility towards Australia.

Our own problems in the world of bushwalking are but a segment of the whole ; they merely relate to particular parts of the country or to a limited class of people. We, however, as lovers of the bush, of the open air, of the trees, forests, birds, flowers and animals—all so peculiarly Australian—have done something towards the acquisition of a national sentiment in our own ranks. As a movement we are not forgetful of the problems which menace our country, and of the urgent necessity for steadfast long range planning if they are to be conquered. This awareness we rightly attribute not only to our special knowledge and interests, but also to our national sentiment. Let us extend that sentiment, and let it be all-embracing, for only in that way can the national ideal be achieved.

EASTER REUNION.

Trials of a Canoeist.

By H. P. ENGLISH.

(The River Canoe Club of New South Wales.)

Plans were being made for weeks before the big event. Food lists were made out, cancelled and revised. The "go-lightlies" scanned with withered eyes the meagre list of dried potatoes and lentils, whilst, with jocund smile, the "coal heavers" sought out the choicest morsels to line the paunch on this great and festive occasion.

The canoes had been transported to Hampden Bridge, Kangaroo Valley, the week prior to our start, and on Thursday night the clan gathered at Central Station for the late train. There was much noise and merriment aboard until Bowral was reached, about midnight. Our transport lorry was there, so stacking the packs and ourselves aboard we set out.

The ride was long, rough and cold, but all the members were in good spirits. We dodged under overhanging branches, sheltered under ground sheets when it rained, saw the torrent over Fitzroy Falls by moonlight, and eventually arrived at Hampden Bridge about 3 a.m. Here we were met by members of the party who had caught an earlier train. In a few minutes camps were pitched, and the new arrivals settled down to a snatch of sleep before the big day ahead.

THRILLS . . . . AND SPILLS.

Friday morning found all up early, and, after much exchanging of views during breakfast, the canoes were inspected for damage in transit, slid down to the river, packed, and the flotilla was away, gripped by the current of the Kangaroo, now four feet in flood. Fourteen canoes carrying a total cargo of 31 souls swept off in triumph down the stream. Paddling was easy, and many thrills were expected. We went over the huge log which last year had loomed above us, and in formation swept down the first long and broken rapid. John and Hilda Blunt in their "BB" were in trouble, threatening to sink by the stern. John's own personal stern was always submerged! "Queen Mary," with the Bishop boys, rolled under a log; they had approached too near, and the current gripped the canoe before they could paddle to the bank, and next moment she was rolling side on under the log with the boys paddling valiantly in all directions.

The "Queen Mary" was first to strike major trouble, when a snag caught her canvas bottom and ripped a five-foot hole in it. She sank before the bank was reached, and all that morning was spent in repairs with one bent needle and a corkscrew. Howard Done and Esme Longworth in "Happy Days," who had left earlier for the trip, were met and successfully passed. The rapids were rough and long, with plenty of spills and thrills. "Trailblazer III.," in negotiating one series of rough rapids through half-submerged she-oaks, left her Commander "Jock" in mid-air, hanging by his trunks.

Lunch found all members spread out for miles along the river, with a good hot sun above ready to dry out those who had the bad luck to capsize in the many and turbulent rapids.

On Saturday we were up with the sun and on our way for more excitement. Wild foaming corners claimed many victims, and above the roar of the rapids could be heard the clicking of cameras as our "photo. friends" secured all the choicest shots from trees and rocks along the banks.

Lunch was welcome, but seemed tame compared with the rapids. At one particularly rough corner, where the waves were the highest and the foam thickest, all followed the leader and finished up to their necks in the "drink" except "Edina," which craft, under the skilful bow-stroke of Had English and the superb command of Ron. Eddes, managed to provide some thrills for the swarms of watchers who perched in the trees to watch the newcomers sweep on to their fate. After much cheering, shouting and emptying out, the flotilla passed on to further spills and rapids new.

SHOALHAVEN RAPIDS. (Photo. by T. Herbert.)

As the day drew on we emerged from the foam into a quieter stretch, and by nightfall reached the junction of the Kangaroo and Shoalhaven, where the comparatively clear waters of the Kangaroo River were in striking contrast with the muddy foam of the flooded Shoalhaven.

Tea was prepared. Tents were up, as rain threatened; then down it came in torrents, but all were satisfied and happy. The sky cleared, and round the fire were related the adventures of all parties, until sleep drew us to dreams of the morrow, with the noise of the Shoalhaven in our ears as it swept along over pebble beds and granite rocks surging through half-submerged river oaks on its way to the sea.

"WANDALONGA" GOES TO VALHALLA.

All were away to an early start on Sunday, and safely negotiated the entry into the Shoalhaven, which had risen more than a foot overnight. The rapids were rough and rocky, with rocks hidden by the muddy water making many "rope-throughs" necessary for the

cautious "canvas cranks." Bert Hopkins and Jack Cavill went bouncing down one long run like a couple of mariners on a sea horse, up to the crest, then down into the trough of the waves formed by the cast-up from the broken rocks, until finally, in a surge, "Aloeura" slid back into a wave and gave skipper and crew a "dip in the drink," both being somewhat soiled when emerging from same.

"Wandalonga" had a certain knavish look, and we felt some evil was afoot. In the midst of the same choppy, treacherous rapid, she submerged, leaving the crew awash, and, being of canvas with no air tanks, she sank in the swirl and the boys had to swim for the shore to save themselves from the next rapid, which loomed close ahead. Everyone joined in the chase ; the canoe rose twice between the rapids, but the force of the current gripped it and it swept out of sight down the second rapid, with the boys in full cry after it. But all in vain ; she was lost. The Shoalhaven had claimed another noble craft—gone to its Valhalla.

The boys, having drained out, were transferred as stowaways, one aboard "Trailblazer III." and the other into "Kootee" with Ted Riley and Bill Kinsey. With the shipwrecked mariners aboard we pushed off, to discover, a quarter of a mile downstream, the paddles and floorboards of the ill-fated craft.

AN EXCITING RESCUE.

"Blimey" was only a mild one to what the boys in the canoe of that name said when she suddenly decided to slide side-on up a snag in the middle of a particularly wild rapid. A sudden skid, a dip in the ditch, and over she goes, with the crew spluttering and gurgling under the "suds." All hand to the rescue ! The canoe floated and was saved. The crew, waterlogged, sank, but were hauled out by the heels and hung over a branch to drain out. Paddles were rescued, but tent and some loose gear were lost. The excitement grew, and away we went in the foam for some more. Cameras recorded the thrills—Fitzpatrick has nothing on our Travelogues !

The rapids were thinning ; Bull's Flat had passed ; lunch seemed ancient history when, eventually, after a long paddle, we reached Burriar for our big camp fire. Camp was pitched up a grassy bank, wet clothes were hung out to dry, and the evening meal was well in hand as dusk fell.

A great pow-wow was held that night around the camp fire. The Great White Chiefs, Jock and Wilbur, presided, and a great spirit of camaraderie prevailed amongst the members, friends and visitors. The spirit of a bygone soul was raised from his bed (by whom we may not tell), songs were sung, tales were told, and the night came to a close.

Gear was packed early on Monday, and the long six-mile paddle to Bamarang started. The morning was sunny and warm, and we paddled along four or five abreast. Eventually Bamarang came into sight, with our lorry waiting to transport us back to Bomaderry. Lunch was short, but half a dozen luscious watermelons kindly donated by our Bamarang friends made life exceedingly pleasant. All voted the reunion the best yet. A great life, a great sport, and great pals ! Who wants more ?

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears."

—Quotation from Thoreau's "Walden" on the tombstone of E. J. Banfield ("The Beachcomber"), Dunk Island, North Queensland.

WALKING NEAR THE ARCTIC.

A Trip Across Lapland.

By PALMER KENT.

The time was 2 a.m., and I was enjoying a deliciously grilled reindeer steak in a cafe. The customers had been greatly interested some twenty minutes earlier when I had struck a match and held it beneath the steak, until the astonished proprietor had "cottoned on" to the idea I wanted it cooked.

Outside the sun was shining brightly, as it had been doing day and night for the past month, which was not surprising ; for this was summer, and the town was Kirkenes, lying east of the North Cape of Norway, and nearly three hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle. I had arrived there two days previously from Spitzbergen on a Russian freighter, where for four days Palmer Kent had been known as Comrade Kent, especially to the third and fourth officers, chefs and stewardess, all of whom were women.

Two American girls unexpectedly dropped into the cafe and sat down at my table. Shyness never being my weakest point, I promptly said : "Hello ! What are you both doing in this out of the way place ?" "Oh, hello !" answered the blonde one. "And where did you come from ?" It's difficult to get a direct answer from a woman, even at Kirkenes !

Within the next half-hour I learnt that their names were Dee and Jean ; that they intended to walk across Lapland from Kirkenes on the Arctic Ocean to the Gulf of Bothnia, a distance of 450 miles, and that I could come along with them providing I agreed to share all costs. Did I agreee ? Too right I did !

We had a lot of trouble securing Finnish visas, apparently because the authorities did not like the idea of three walkers wandering happy-go-lucky across Lapland ; but eventually our passports bore the all-important permits, and one fine morning saw us starting on our journey. It was too cold to sleep out, for we were over three hundred miles nearer the North Pole than Iceland, and our packs were therefore reduced to a minimum. That day we covered 38 miles. The magic air made walking an invigorating pleasure, but the silence was uncanny and exerted a depressing influence on us. We didn't see a bird, and, only occasionally, stunted vegetation, although later we were to come to the far famed forests of pine and birch, and walk beside some of Finland's 60,000 lakes.

FINNISH HOSPITALITY.

At 7 p.m. we arrived at Svonick, where my passport created much interest, it being the first Australian one to be presented there. We crossed a river by motor launch, to stand a little later for the first time on Finnish soil, and to make the astonishing discovery that here the clock is put back an hour in the nightless summer for "daylight" saving.

We knocked on the door of a farm-house, and, by means of sign language, secured accommodation for the night. The girls shared a crude home-made bed, and I turned-in close by on the floor. Sleep was easier said than done, for on this and many other occasions we were tortured both by mosquitoes and a vicious species of red bug—which lived in the log walls until visitors arrived ! Added to this, the sun shining all the while and an impossibility of calculating the

time made our sleep restless. After breakfast, which consisted of cold meat, fish, bread, cheese, and delicious coffee, we paid fivepence each for our board and set out once more "new worlds to conquer."

This was typical of the accommodation we experienced, although the three of us frequently slept on the bare boards of some outlandish Finnish farm whose inhabitants during the short summer grew potatoes, rhubarb and rye in double quick time on account of the continuous sunshine. Occasionally we stayed at a Government rest-house, where the atmosphere was delightfully casual. There were times when I would ask for a single room, only to be told by some considerate proprietor that it would be cheaper if I shared a room with Dee and Jean! They don't do that in Australia!

PICTURESQUE LAPLAND VILLAGE.
(Photo. by Palmer Kent.)

After much persuasion, we once stayed for a few days at a Lapp village. The Lapps we found to be a brave race, industrious, peaceful, good tempered, but very superstitious. Their herds of reindeer form their chief means of livelihood, which is augmented by fishing. These Lapps had enormous appetites and thirsts, and at one sitting often drank over a dozen large cups of coffee flavoured with rich reindeer milk.

Saturday night is bath time for the whole Finnish community of Lapland. The girls and I always accepted the inevitable invitation to join in these ablutions when we were spending a Saturday "down on the farm." First the whole family would assemble in the main room, and we would all undress with delightful simplicity! Entirely nude, we next followed in father's footsteps to a log bathroom built in the open some distance away. On one side was a crude type of stone oven, under which a fire had been burning for the whole day. Here stones had been heated, and while we lay on a wooden platform

buckets of water were thrown over them, thus causing dense clouds of steam to rise. Twenty minutes of this Turkish bath, and then came the trial of fortitude and torture. The women thrashed the men with bunches of birch-twigs tied together, and then the men thrashed the women. Did it hurt? My oath it did!

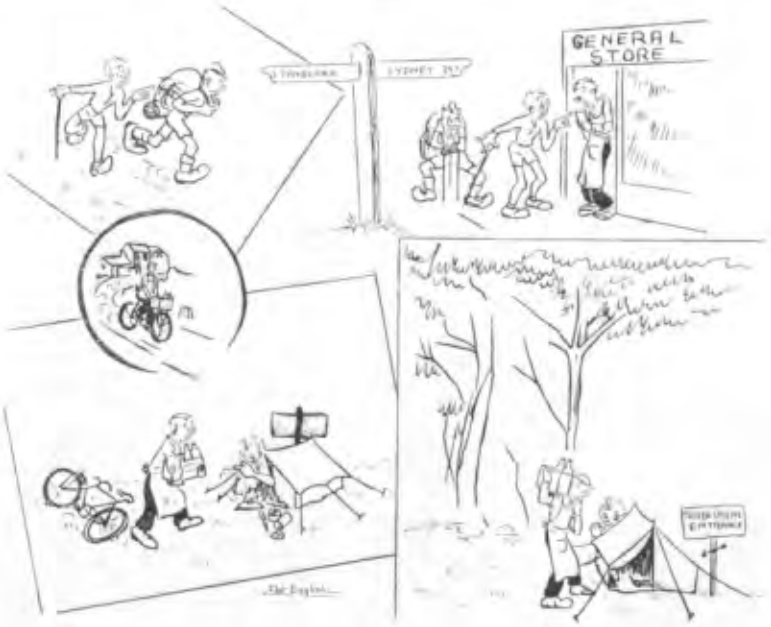
Finally we all strolled into the open, lowered buckets down a well, and then playfully threw ice-cold water over each other. A race of Spartans, these Finns! I was glad to put some well-worn clothes on again.

NEARING OUR DESTINATION

At last we came to our first large town, Rovaniemi, just south of the Arctic Circle, and not far from our destination. We stayed at the best hotel for some days as guests of the proprietor, because I diplomatically played some compositions by Sibelius, the Finnish musical hero, on the piano. Our host drove us to centres where we saw magnificent folk dancing and heard the solemn music of Finland.

Three days later we walked into Kemi, and there ahead of us lay the cold waters of the Gulf of Bothnia. We gleefully congratulated each other on the successful conclusion of our novel journey.

The following morning a silent trio tramped to the railway station. During the six weeks we had been together we had lived a life full of interest and happiness, while such was the hospitality of the Finns that our total expenses were a fraction under 38/- each. Now at last we must separate, Dee and Jean bound for Helsinki, and I to stay with some friends at Stockholm. We kissed good-bye, and as the train slowly steamed out of the station I suddenly forgot that I was a man, because I could not observe the scenery owing to tears that could not be checked. Those six weeks meant living life to the full. I still pay silent homage to my God of Luck for them!



TO ABDUL.

By DOROTHY LAWRY.
(The Sydney Bush Walkers.)

"They folded their tents like the Arabs
And silently stole away."

Any dignified Arab in burnous and flowing robes would probably be politely incredulous at the suggestion that there are any points of similarity between himself and the bushwalkers who wander round the Sydney district clad in shirts and shorts. Doubtless he would also be puzzled to find that amongst the bushwalkers "abdul" is a verb. Some of the younger members of the fraternity have recently been trying to find out how it came into use, and Wal. Roots, a past-President of the New South Wales Federation of Bush Walking Clubs, has supplied this explanation.

Some years ago Wal. and his wife spent a week-end at the country house of their friends, the Brewers, "Happy-daze," Hat Hill, Blackheath. This is a house of great individuality, with rooms of various shapes and each with its own name. One room is called "Abdul's Tent," and the visitor does not need to ask why. He immediately has a vision of an Arab's tent. A week or two later the Rootses walked over to Era and found Peter Page camped there, with one side of his "A" tent raised to the level of the ridge. When they caught sight of the tent, both stopped, and, turning to each other, they exclaimed: "Abdul's tent!"

The term was apt, and it stuck.

The earliest bushwalkers used whatever gear they could buy or make, and they all had "cottage" tents with one end closed. Those who slept in the tents did so with their feet to the doors! The others invariably spread their groundsheets and slept by the campfire—except when it rained.

When I joined the Sydney Bush Walkers in 1929 I had a home-made copy of a tent bought in England, which was similar to those used by members of the Camping Club of Great Britain and Ireland. It had several features that were new to the bushwalkers, but the most important was that it could be opened at both ends. Soon many walkers were altering their tents to improve the ventilation. About 1930 "Paddy" Pallin started his business of providing camping gear for walkers, and nearly all the tents he made to order were "A" or "wall" tents, opening at both ends. More and more bush-walkers took to sleeping in their tents, particularly during that year, when we had over twenty wet week-ends in succession.

Probably it was at Era that tents were first "abdulled," for there they are left up all day on Sundays while the owners surf or play on the beach. A tent without a fly becomes unbearably hot when the sun shines on it for long, but an "abdulled" tent provides a cool shade in which to lunch.

Throughout the drought years the practice of abdulling has become firmly established, and even in mid-summer many bushwalkers now sleep in "abdulled" tents. The verb has become an integral part of our vocabulary.

In summer an "abdulled" tent has one serious disadvantage. It is wide open to the onslaughts of mosquitoes and flies, and so, a few years ago, I made for my tent a net that would fit all round the three open sides. The idea is now spreading, and by this adaptation "Abdul's Tent" becomes a meat safe!

KHANCOBAN AND THE HILLS.

By FRANK A. CRAFT.
(The Warrigal Club of New South Wales.)

Khancoban is the base for attack upon the Kosciusko highlands from the western side. Few people visit it without carrying away a vivid impression of its many beauties, but the person who attempts to describe his impressions is usually either brave or foolhardy. If he is inspired by the novel sights which have greeted his eye at first glance he is apt to throw sober truth to the winds. The unhappy discoverer returns with tales of the marvellous, like another Sir John Mandeville—of immense wild dogs, of unnumbered herds of brumbies, of strange lost waterfalls, or of emus prancing on the slopes of Kosciusko.

ABOVE THE TREE LINE, KOSCIUSKO HIGHLANDS.
(Photo. by F. A. Craft.)

It is hard to lose all the first enthusiasm for Khancoban, and not to place it above Tooma or Bright, Omeo or Mitta Mitta, which are places with fine scenery, and with the same superb play of light and shadow on mountain, plain, and river.

Khancoban has some sternly practical reasons on its side. It is near Corryong, the best store town near the highlands, and is within a day's march of Kosciusko, Dargals, or Groggin. I pass the attraction of trout fishing as a sport. Some day, if I become old and tired, I may attempt to lure rainbow or brown from the water with the aristocratic dry fly, or break the law and have recourse to the loathsome grasshopper, or the still more despised worm, but until that day arrives I accept fish thankfully from the hand of him who offers it, without too close an enquiry as to the method of catching. Such gifts of fish are not the least of things which make me think gratefully of the Murray headwaters.

The first problem for the walker is the scarp which must be surmounted before the wind-blown world of the tops is reached. This means a climb of anything between three and five thousand feet—a matter of considerable effort in the hot summer walking months. Packs are therefore reduced to a minimum, and no tent is carried on short trips, reliance being placed on stockmen's huts which dot the plateau at regular intervals. Under such conditions a quick dash into the highlands, and an even quicker return to a valley road, become the order of things; and it is remarkable how much can be crammed into a number of such trips of three or four days apiece with Khancoban, Tooma or a similar centre as base. Much can be made of single days, because it is daylight in summer at 4 o'clock in the morning, and sixteen hours of daylight are available, making all the hills and scarp tops within a few miles of the roads easily accessible. The walker climbs early and descends late, with no pack to catch in scrub or make its sweating owner wish he had never been born.

Climbing the scarps is nothing like the terrible thing it sounds. Tracks are useful where they exist, particularly for getting through the scrub and forest zones, but they are often much too vertical, and the number of stones seems to grow wonderfully from year to year. For all that, I put up with their disadvantages of stones, dust, and extra flies if they go where I want to go. For everyday walking, however, one's own track has to be chosen. This is usually quite fair through the lower forest slopes up to an altitude of three thousand feet odd, but above that are two possibilities—either there is ash forest and scrub, succeeded by snow gum thickets like bayonet edges, or there are jungle-like growths of trees, vines, and scrub sprawled over treacherous rocks. The former are not so bad when the walker finds the wallaby breaks, but the latter put up a "keep out" notice which the walker is careful to respect, because he does not want to spoil Nature's handwork. He goes right around, or, if that is too far, back by the way he came. Once through the thousand or so feet of scrub the going improves over the heath lands, scattered forest and scrub of the high tablelands.

CONTRAST IN HILL AND VALLEY.

This is wandering rather far from Khancoban, where the hours of idleness and rest are spent. Here we lie under the willows by the river and trace the way for the next attack on the ridges, or we splash in the cool water and think of the heat and dust of the last rockslide crossed far up. The hills recede. The clouds which float over the valley dapple hill, plain and river, but the hours are long before the first suggestion of evening comes. Then the birds appear in flocks: the ibis, the pelican, and the lordly brolga wade in the damp meadows; the fences are lined with magpies and falcons. These scenes of peace are in striking contrast to the hills, over which the lines of rising mist break in the early morning to give some of the grandest possible effects, which are only equalled by the same hills covered with snow in winter, seen under an angry sunset.

Travelling is not all beauty and enjoyment in these hills and valleys. First amongst the annoyances are flies; they are ill-bred! The Blue Mountain flies are content to be carried in peace on the walker's pack, but the species in the Southern Highlands are sticky, offensive, and devoted to flying in one's face. Fly nets are useful up to a point, but they must be discarded when beaten tracks are left, thus leaving a defenceless victim. Second only to the fly is the ubiquitous ant, which lurks in millions in the snow gum coppice

where the walker, pausing to search for a possible way amongst the bushes and fallen stems, is not allowed to stay in one place for more than a few seconds. The small black ants of the higher tops are penetration itself. Packs, boots, and cameras are open highroads to them, and only sealed cans are safe from their ingress.

Then there are snakes. I have never been able to photograph them, as I have managed to see the tiger snakes in time to give them a wide enough berth to put them well out of camera range; whilst walker and snake alike are wonderfully agile when the black reptiles are almost trodden on. By the time things have settled down again, the snake has gone.

Pack horses carry most of the stockmen's gear into the hills, but, for those walkers who put their trust in them, the equine tribe is a nuisance of the first water. A trained pack horse can estimate the weight of a load to a decimal of a pound, and there is no hope of budging him if he considers himself a few ounces overloaded. He also has a disturbing habit of making for home at any time, and he gets rid of load, saddle and all before turning up at his town house! Melbourne walkers in the region are devoted to them, but Sydneysiders usually rely on their own legs to carry thinner packs. Do not believe their tales of hardships too readily, as a reasonable walker easily beats a pack train on a hard day's march, and he does not have the bother of looking after the most cunning of all creatures.

Did you know that organised bushwalkers in Sydney have been directly responsible for securing over two thousand three hundred acres of reserves in New South Wales for the use and enjoyment of the public? This is exclusive of many areas which they have assisted to secure as parks.

THE ECHIDNA.

By R. ELSE MITCHELL.

(The Warrigal Club of New South Wales.)

In the realms of natural history Australia can boast of numerous specimens which, although they are not of giant proportions like the big game of South Africa, are unique in the scientific world. The Lyre Bird, the Platypus, the Tasmanian Devil, the Koala, and the many marsupials are amongst the most commonly quoted, but the Echidna or Spiny Ant Eater is unfortunately often overlooked.

ON THE DEFENSIVE!

(Photo. by R. Else Mitchell.)

The Echidna and the Platypus are the only surviving members of the monetrematan group of mammals, and are found only in Australia ; both animals not only lay eggs, but also suckle their young, and it is this characteristic, above all else, that distinguishes them from any other type of living animal. In the late eighteenth century, when Australia was settled, much surprise was caused in scientific circles by Governor Phillip sending a platypus, or as it was called, a "water mole" or "duck bill," to England. The controversy which ensued as to the exact mode of generation of the species and its life history was not finally settled until 1884, as it was very difficult to maintain them in captivity. Likewise, too, the Echidna, or to use the vernacular name, the Porcupine Ant Eater, caused concern amongst the leading zoological authorities, and many attempts were made to ship specimens to England for study.

Reports about the Echidna and its habits made in 1804 indicated that it was thought to lay eggs, and its strength was said to be extraordinary, cages and boxes often being ineffective to keep it in captivity. Later investigation has confirmed these estimates of the strength of the Echidna, and it is generally considered to be the strongest quadruped in proportion to its size in existence ; its facility for burrowing into the ground is unrivalled, and with its four legs tucked under the body it can dig away ordinary soft earth at a rate which makes capture almost impossible. In addition to this defensive quality, the Echidna is well protected by porcupine-like spines, and when it is alarmed it will often roll into a ball, the head being buried under the fore part of the body. In this position, with the spines raised, the animal presents the appearance of a small profuse tuft of quills, and woe betide the unwary whose curiosity leads him to turn it over or to investigate it closely. Contrary to what is often thought, however, the spines are not poisonous.

Although the Echidna is said to be more at home in sandy country, or where the earth is soft, many specimens have been seen in the rocky parts of the Blue Mountains. In these districts it seems to prefer the heights, where the earth is dry, and seldom is one seen by the banks of rivers and creeks where the earth is moist.

In its food habits, the Echidna differs from the Platypus, which is probably the most fastidious amongst living animals next to the Koala and the Giraffe ; the Ant Eater will live on anything the country furnishes, but, as its name indicates, is particularly partial to ants and small insects, which are gathered in or on the long extensile tongue. In captivity, however, the Echidna has been found to eat well-nigh anything, and some of the reports of the early visiting scientists show that specimens have been fed on flour and water, which seemed to afford enough nourishment to keep it healthy.

In all its characteristics, the Echidna is a remarkable animal and a scientific curiosity. It is fortunate that it is absolutely protected under the Birds and Animals Protection Act ; this should be sufficient to prevent its extermination as a species.

"RIVER GUM."

By W. LLEWELLYN RYLAND.

How your branches shake and quiver
  Rustled by a rising breeze,
Standing staunch beside the river,
  Trees triumphant of all trees.

Swirling waters swiftly rushing
  Catch your colours one by one,
Now the western sky is flushing
  To the setting of the sun.

Comes the silver stars above you,
  Mellow moon across the lea,
Gaunt old gum I feel I love you
  As one can only love a tree.

AN ELUSIVE LANDMARK.

Euroka Trig. Station Re-discovered.

By H. M. WHAITE.
(The Warrigal Club of New South Wales.)

Down in the south of the Blue Labyrinth, near where the main watershed separates the Erskine from the Warragamba, lies a first-class trigonometrical station called Euroka.

Those who have chanced to notice this area while examining the Blue Mountains map have doubtless been puzzled by the incongruous spectacle of a trig. station set in a region liberally sprayed with the abbreviation "approx." It is not hard to find the reason. All official maps of this area are based on one drawn by J. R. Butler in 1832. He apparently sketched it from the higher hills along where the King's Tableland–Lower Burragorang Road now runs, and did not venture far, if at all, into the tangle of ridges he observed. Fifty years later, the Euroka trig. came into being; its location was accurately determined, and its position then forgotten except in terms of latitude and longitude, as shown in the Registry of Trigonometrical Stations.

That was the position when, in October, 1937, our first Warrigal party made the through journey from lower Erskine Creek to Wentworth Falls. Their primary object was to do the journey; their secondary object was to reach the trig. lying, according to all maps, directly on the ridge they were to traverse. However, it could not be found. Though a site was selected which corresponded closely in map position and height to the alleged trig. station, not a single stone could be seen, and most Warrigals considered it had never been built. Three and a half years passed, and we forgot Euroka trig.

MAPPING THE LABYRINTH.

Meanwhile, Jack Gibson and I had started to map the Western and Southern Blue Labyrinth. Many of the higher points along the western bank of the Erskine had been fixed, but such is the extent of the area that one or two of these tops had not been visited. Last April, three of us set out to traverse the ridge from the main range to Mount Hall, a prominent mountain on the south-west side of the big bend in Erskine Creek. There are five hills on this ridge, but as they had previously been determined from surrounding reading points no useful mapping purpose was served by this visit. However, we went there in order to say we had been there, and also to build a cairn. The latter job was already done. As we burst from the thick scrub into the comparative open surrounding the pile of stones, I did not, unlike Jack, realise its significance. For me, as for many others, Euroka trig. had become a myth descended from the early days, and it took some minutes to realise what we had found.

Through the courtesy of an official of the Department of Lands, I was later able to examine the maps and documents relating to this station. One was a copy of Butler's 1832 map, on which someone had pencilled and queried the position of Euroka trig. Though placed, wrongly, on the main range, the significance of the position shown lies in the fact that it overlooks the Erskine, and is not some miles away as given on the tourist map. The penciller had appar-

ently been associated with someone who had visited the spot and knew the creek lies immediately below.

THE MAN WHO BUILT THE CAIRN.

Of greater interest were two documents compiled by E. H. Taylor, who visited the spot on November 16th, 1881, and again on April 25th, 1882. His party, in addition to building the cairn, took a series of twenty bearings by means of some form of telescopic compass, or by a telescope plus compass. Most of the points sighted lay beyond the Labyrinth and could not be identified, but the two that came within the region had bearings substantially the same as mine. Some of Taylor's remarks are of extreme interest. Discussing the trig.'s location, he says: "Situated in the County of Cook, bearing about north from the junction of the Cox River with the Warragamba—about five miles distant in line." He adds the following details in another column: "Way of access is very difficult. I ascended a very steep gully in the cliff about 800 feet high at the back of Mr. Peter Fitzpatrick's farm, and thence through a scrubby and rough country across to the hill; distance travelled estimated at 12 miles. A horse cannot be taken to the hill from this side. The gully referred to is on the Warragamba about a mile below the junction of the Cox River."

A glance at any map of this country will show that Gogongolly is the gully in question. This is verified from the parish map of Cooba, which shows a grant to Peter Fitzpatrick in the middle of last century. One of the Fitzpatricks appears to have visted the trig. station on May 9th, 1882, with a party, for their names are scratched on the circular discs. They would have followed a blazed trail, for Taylor's report of April 25th, 1882, states: "Track from Junction marked—about 5 hr. walking."

AFTER SIXTY YEARS.

One week-end last June we set out to follow Taylor's original route. As expected, no trace remains of the marked trail, but to one versed in the ways of the Labyrinth the way was simple and straightforward. Leaving the junction at noon, we lunched an hour later in the narrowest part of the gorge at a height of 550 feet above the river. Higher, we branched up a creek to the left and worked round on to the tops, finally emerging on the top at a height of 1850 feet above sea-level, or 1650 feet above the junction. That night we camped on the main range, and reached the trig. next morning. Our actual walking time was four and a half hours, which compares favourably with Taylor's five hours.

After correcting to magnetic north, our bearings from the trig. agreed closely with those obtained by Taylor. We could not see some of his points (e.g., Jellore) due to the growth of mallee scrub, and others we could not identify with any degree of certainty; but altogether we obtained ten bearings in common, which clearly proves the identity of the trig.

In conclusion, there is one paragraph of the Taylor reports which brings poignant memories of those of us who walk in the Blue Labyrinth. In a section devoted to "Camping Ground," he says: "The country about the hill is all scrubby and without grass. Water only to be had in deep gorges. Being without tents, I camped in a cave in the sandstone rock. . . . ." When at nightfall we begin looking for a sandstone cave with plenty of firewood, carefully guarding the bags of precious water carried from the Erskine a thousand feet below, we often think of this and realise that we were by no means the first bushwalkers in the Blue Labyrinth.

FEDERATION CHANGES.

Since the publication of the last number of "The Bushwalker" late in 1940, there have been major changes in the personnel of the Federation officers. Mr. W. A. Holesgrove, or plain "Bill," as he is known to most of the walking fraternity, has ceased to occupy the presidential chair, and his place has been taken by Mr. Oliver Wyndham, who for the last two years has been a willing deputy to the President. Although it is perhaps a matter for regret that the Federation has lost the services of one who was not only a fine leader in the true sense of the word, but who also made co-operation the keystone of the Federation's policy, it is nevertheless a great consolation to know that Mr. Holesgrove will continue to give his active support to the bush walking movement, not only as a delegate to the Council, but also as a member of many of the sub-committees which have been set up to assist in carrying out the work of the Federation.

At the annual meeting recently, Mr. H. S. Freeman, who has been Treasurer of the Federation for the last eight years, also relinquished that position, and his place has been taken by Mr. W. Watson. Mr. Freeman has been a devoted and thorough Treasurer, and his retirement severs one of the few remaining links with the Associated Bush Walking Clubs which existed prior to the formation of the Federation.

Finally, we have to record the resignation of the Honorary Secretary, Mrs. K. Iredale (formerly Miss Merle Hamilton), whose marriage earlier in the year has called her to a new domain—the home. We hasten to wish her every happiness.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL !

By C. A. FORDHAM.

(The River Canoe Club of New South Wales.)

This is the story of a trip that was planned down to the last raisin—but Man proposes and God disposes ! It was all brought about by a chance meeting on the Yalwal Creek when gold and cedar were dicussed at great length, so business and pleasure were to be combined, with the canoe as the medium of travel.

The members of the party were : Ken. Thompson, 63, born at Burriar on the Shoalhaven, and lived there ever since—a wonderful bushman who knows the Shoalhaven as most of us know our back yard ; Bill Hamill, 72, with the energy and outlook of a young man —a prospector and farmer ; Lou Cain and myself, just two city folk who love the country and everything that goes with it. When Ken. was young and his beard was black, he and his twin brother used to go far up the river cutting cedar and floating it down to Nowra. On one of these expeditions he discovered a reef carrying gold at a place called the Big Cedar Brush, a beautiful gully approximately seven miles below Badgery's Crossing. The reef was a large one, but did not appear to carry much gold, and gold in those days was cheap.

The object of our trip was to go to the Big Cedar Brush, find the reef, and get Bill's expert opinion. It appeared to be a good idea, as gold is now higher than at any time in Australian history.

Lou and I met Bill at Moss Vale, and, after loading the two canoes on to a truck, set off for the junction of Meryla Creek and Kangaroo River, which we reached after dark. Next morning we set to work to mend the canoes, which had been slightly damaged in transit, and got them into Kangaroo River. We paddled down to the Shoalhaven and met Ken, who had ridden over from Burriar. One look at the Shoalhaven, and we realised that it would mean a portage on every rapid, as only a trickle was showing over the stones. It was indeed hard work, as some of the rapids were half a mile long, and it meant three trips every time. We reached our destination on the evening of the third day, and the following morning, Sunday, we set out to find the reef. After half a day climbing and fighting the scrub the lode was revealed. It didn't take Bill long to realise it was just another golden dream gone wrong !

In the afternoon Ken. took us into the Big Cedar Brush to show us some more of its wonders : cedars by the dozen towering up to 100 feet, and five feet through at the butt ; giant stinging trees, dreaded by all bushmen for their poisonous sting ; waterfalls, wonga pigeons, and cliffs towering up to a thousand feet—a place to long remember and leaving a great desire to visit again.

ALARMING DEVELOPMENTS.

Early next morning Lou complained of stomach pains, and of course we all blamed the damper, but as he felt no relief during the day and his condition became worse through the night we realised it must be appendicitis. The position seemed hopeless, but there was only one thing—a dash to the nearest doctor. We had two courses open to us—to get through to Grassy Gully, a small mining township, and get a car into Nowra from there, or to make for the first farm on the Kangaroo River. Owing to the low condition of the Shoalhaven, we decided on the latter.

We left Bill and one canoe at the camp with all the gear, except the food and equipment we would require for the hurried trip. Leaving at daylight on the Tuesday morning, we dragged the canoe through the easiest rapids, but of course had to portage the tough ones. Lou, although in great pain, was able to walk the rapids. We reached the junction of the Meryla and Kangaroo just at dark.

I left Ken. and Lou there and set out for the first farm, which I knew was about five miles by the track, but only two across country. Owing to the darkness, I had to take the longer way, and when I arrived at the farm I was attacked by a pack of dogs. After much acrobatic and aerobatic manoeuvres to prevent being bitten, I reached the house, which was inhabited by three bachelor brothers, one of whom had been taken to hospital that day. After many explanations and questions, which had to be shouted above the yapping of the dogs, the first brother, called Edgar, agreed to drive us to the nearest farm that was connected to a 'phone ; this was six miles down the valley. After Edgar was dressed the next job was to find the horse—some job in about a 1000-acre paddock, when we couldn't see our hands in front of us. I decided to go one way and Edgar the other, but the dogs didn't agree ! As soon as I left Edgar they took to me again, so we had to stick together. Luckily, after a couple of miles tramping, the horse, "Doctor" by name, heard us and started to whinny, and so gave himself away. Eventually we got "Doctor" harnessed into an old four-seater buckboard and were on our way. We had only gone about a mile when we met Lou and Ken, who had slowly come on behind us. The road was so narrow we had to unharness "Doctor" to turn the buckboard around. A cold westerly was blowing, and, the three of us only being lightly clad, were half frozen. This was one of the most uncomfortable journeys I have ever had. How Lou stuck it I don't know, but eventually, like all horrors, it came to an end. We reached the farmhouse at five minutes past midnight, and got the folks out of bed.

A CLOSE CALL.

They rang the township for a hired car, and while waiting for its arrival we were kindly treated to supper. Lou was just about all in, but the thought that he would soon be in the care of a doctor kept his spirits up. The car arrived at 12.30 a.m., and then the patient was off on the last leg of his nightmare journey—a 20-mile ride to Berry Hospital. At 2.30 a.m., when the operation was commenced, the doctor remarked that another two hours and his services wouldn't have been needed ! All's well that ends well ! After four weeks Lou had to have a further operation, and, after three months in Berry Hospital, went home to recuperate for another canoe holiday, knowing that at least he would not have to worry about appendicitis.

Ken. and I returned to where we had parked the canoe, went back and picked up Bill, and after a week's hard work were glad to see Burriar.

The holiday had its bright moments. The fishing was the best I have ever had, and we practically lived on perch and wild duck. Above all, we experienced the most wonderful of any hospitality, that of the Australian bushfolk, who welcome a stranger, and, irrespective of time and inconvenience to themselves, give everything to help those in trouble or sickness. May the spirit of the bush be kept alive ! Look to it, Club members, that you foster it. You will only realise its true value when you need it !

TASMANIA, ISLE OF MOUNTAINS AND LAKES.

A Trip to Frenchman's Cap.

By V. CHAMPION.

(*The Coast and Mountain Walkers of New South Wales.*)

Whither will ye ? To Maria Island on the East Coast, picturesque and mountainous ; to Frenchman's Cap, monarch of the South-West ; to the Pieman River on the wild West Coast ; to Adamsfield, scene of the osmiridium rush in 1925 ; or to the Lake St. Clair—Cradle Mountain Reserve ? I'm sorry, walkers, time and space are limited ; so, leaving these other interesting walks, will ye tread the hard road to the mystery mountain of Tasmania, Frenchman's Cap ?

We left Queenstown on a sunny morning in November. Shortly after passing King River we could see, far away, the "Frenchman" haughtily raising his snowy head. We hoped that the weather gods would be kind, as this mountain lies within the notoriously wet region of the West Coast. The gods were kind ! The weather was perfect.

Thirty-five miles out we bade farewell to our trusty conveyance, and, shouldering our heavy packs, set off along the Jane River Goldfield track. This we followed for four or five miles, crossing the Franklin and Loddon Rivers, with, at times, wonderful views ahead of the Frenchman Ranges. Leaving this track we turned west across a finger of button-grass, Philps Lead, into fairly thick scrub. Camp was made among some burnt-out ti-tree by a small creek.

SCENIC GRANDEUR.

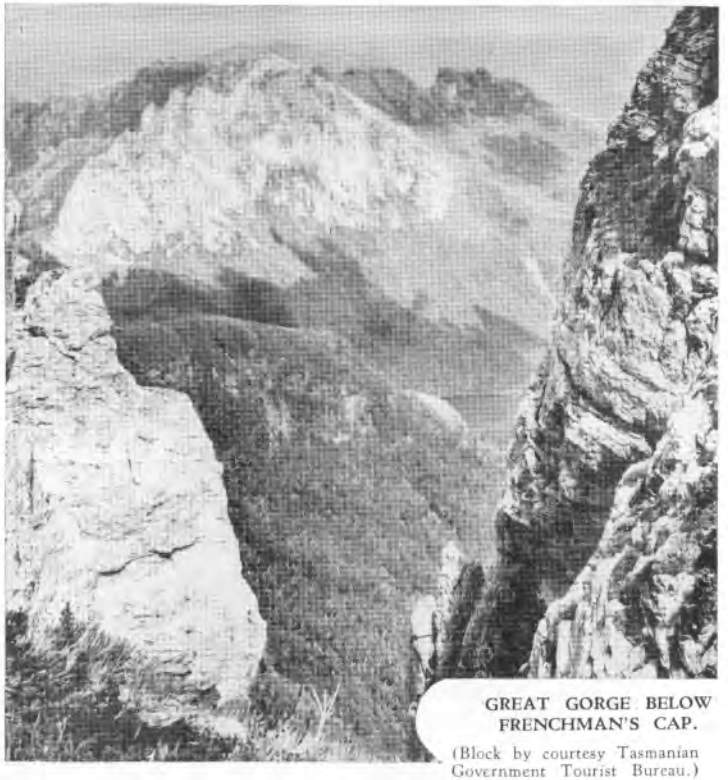
Next morning dawned clear and beautiful, and we followed Philp's 30-year-old blazes and stakes through a myrtle forest into scrub, across button-grass and through tangled growth, finally crossing the outlet from Lake Vera on a small wet log—a very precarious business. Progress now became painfully slow along the heavily timbered and steep shores of the lake, of which we caught tantalising glimpses. At the head of the lake we gladly dumped our packs and stood entranced. Mirrored perfectly were graceful Huon pines, their foliage lightly caressing the water, and steep myrtle-clad slopes overtopped by Barron Pass and the jagged peaks of a white quartzite range.

After swimming and lunching we set off on the most strenuous part of the whole trip—the steep climb up the Barron Pass, where the track winds ever up and up, over and under logs and through think undergrowth. Upwards we toiled, following the old blazes with difficulty, and so on to the Pass, which is like a bite out of a solid mountain range. Straight ahead lay the Frenchman, a magnificent site, with Lakes Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen and Millicent nestling in its valleys. From here the track led over rocks and crags, skirting giant cliffs, with wonderful views in all directions. Camp was made in Artichoke Valley.

Our third day was again perfect, and leaving the Valley we made a sharp ascent to sight Lake Tahune, a gem in a setting of King Billy pines and pandanni, proudly reflecting the Frenchman, which rises sheer from the water ; 1000 feet of dark basalt capped with 1000 feet of gleaming white quartzite. We were tempted to linger, but ahead lay our goal. Scrambling up a very steep slope we came to a

veritable knife-edge. Below us, now looking very small, lay Lake Tahune on one hand and Lake Gwendolen on the other. From here the ascent became less arduous, small cairns marking the easiest way ; and so to the final slope which led to the summit—4776 feet.

Half of Tasmania lay revealed. To the south Mount Anne and range upon range of mountains ; to the west, Macquarie Harbour, the West Coast Range and the Southen Ocean ; to the east, Barron Pass and the King William Ranges ; and to the north and north-west, Valentine's Peak, Barn Bluff, Cradle Mountain, Mount Oakleigh and the Pelion Mountains. Down below, glistening in the sunlight, lay Lakes Tahune, Gwendolen, Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen and Millicent. (T. N. Moore, an early Tasmanian explorer of note, laid it down that all western lakes should have feminine names to suit their capricious loveliness.)



GREAT GORGE BELOW FRENCHMAN'S CAP.

(Block by courtesy Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau.)

For two hours we basked in the glorious sunshine, feasting our eyes on the beauty around us, and talking of early attempts to climb the Frenchman. The cairn on the summit was erected by a party under Surveyor Sprent in 1856.

Until the opening of the West Coast Road and the Jane River track some seven or eight years ago, this mountain remained practically inaccessible. It is probably one of the three high mountains sighted by Tasman in 1642.

Very reluctantly we left the summit, descending to a shoulder of the mountain, where we lunched, getting water from a little snow-fed stream. We made our way back to the knife-edge, taking last long looks at the glorious panoramas, then down the stream to Lake Tahune, where we made camp.

The following day was gloriously sunny. We lingered long round the lake, admiring the reflections and the beautiful foliage of the trees and ferns. At noon we set off for Lake Vera, which we reached at 4.30 p.m. Here we made early camp and enjoyed the play of sunset colours over the lake.

We left camp in bright sunshine, which soon became a Tasmanian heat-wave—very trying across the shadeless button-grass plains. Hot, tired and begrimed we reached the road, just missing our conveyance to Queenstown.

Do you still want to come a-walking to the Frenchman? Well, I have warned you! Its beauty will ever haunt you. As Keats says :-

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever;
Its loveliness increases."

The generally used term "bushwalking" is a local addition to the English language since the formation of "The Sydney Bush Walkers" Club in 1927. In England one "rambles"; in America the term is "hike"; New Zealanders call it "tramping." The Melbourne Walking and Touring Club is over forty years old, and the Hobart Walking Club advises everyone to "Know Your Country—WALK!"

SCENES OF WILD GRANDEUR.

The Colo and Wolgan Valleys.

By E. WATTS.

To those desiring to walk in rugged country amid wonderful scenery, the beauty and wildness of the Wolgan and Colo Rivers should not fail to appeal. The magnificent bluffs and cliffs which flank the valleys, the numerous deep gorges in the Colo, are a photographer's delight, and compensate for the rigours of hacking one's way through the tangled debris of fallen trees, scrub, masses of thorn-bush, vines, nettles and bracken, which are encountered in profusion.

The Colo River was at one time considered as a potential supply for Sydney, but for some technical reason the scheme was discarded; the valley was also surveyed in 1878 for a railway route to the interior of the country, but this was also abandoned as being no better than the present route over the Blue Mountains. Apart from traces of the track which was made during this survey, the valley to-day is practically in its virgin state.

If the trip through the Wolgan and Colo Valleys is undertaken, the old township of Newnes on the Wolgan is a convenient starting point, and it may be reached by road from Lidsdale or from the Main Western Line at Newnes Junction. We adopted the latter course and followed the old railway line along its 32 miles of track, the first half of which passes through not particularly scenic mountain highlands, including the Newnes State Forest. The oil pipeline from Glen Davis to Newnes Junction is laid for a good distance along the old track, and a few miles beyond Dean, 19 miles out, where it begins the descent of the mountain range, the scenery improves and beautiful extensive views of the Wolgan River are obtainable from places where the railway track has been cut on the almost sheer face of the cliffs.

OLD NEWNES TOWNSHIP.

This line eventually brought us into Newnes, which, although near Glen Davis, is now only a desolate village. Many years ago, when work at the shale oil works there was in full swing, John Fell & Co. employed about 800 men. Then the picturesque mountains encircled a busy township, but to-day less than thirty people reside in the valley, and it is dotted with ruins and empty houses, the only businesses remaining being the Post Office and the hotel.

We spent some time in Newnes, and by the courtesy of the caretaker, a Mr. Wilson, inspected the remains of the old works and refinery, the three tall chimney stacks and other buildings of which are still standing. From this point our route lay down the Wolgan to the Colo into the rugged darkness of uninhabited territory.

It was drought time, and the majority of the creeks were low; the Capertee River had very little water in it, and other streams such as Rocky Creek and Annie Rowan Creek were practically dry. The Wolgan, however, was quite normal, and according to local tradition has never been known to run dry. From the Capertee Junction to Upper Colo, which was near the end of the trip, the only firmly running streams were the Wollemi, which rises to the north near Putty, and the Wollongambe, which is the largest tributary of the Colo, having a huge catchment of mountainous country to the west and south-west extending to the Grose. The Wollongambe is most

spectacular, and joins the Colo through a wide and wild gorge. It was in the valley of this creek that a mining engineer who was lost in the district a few years ago was eventually found ; it appeared that he had mistaken the Wollongambe for the Colo, which he had set out to follow upstream to Newnes.

As we went downstream from Newnes the going became more difficult, and our progress proportionately slower. We had heard dire tales of the obstacles which the Colo presented before starting this trip, and had been inclined to discredit them a little. However, they proved not to be exaggerated, particularly after we had reached Wollemi Creek. There is no track at all from this junction to Blacksmith's Creek, and, as the river banks are clothed with dense tangled growth of thorny vines and debris, we found that almost every yard had to be contested. We had fortunately taken the precaution, unnecessary as we thought, of carrying a brush hook to hack our way through the thickets, and it proved our best friend, although even then our hands, arms and legs were so torn aud cut by thorns that we frequently had to resort to the first-aid kit.

OUR OBSTACLES LESSEN.

For many miles we got little relief from the arduous travelling, and, to make matters worse, camping spots were so few and far between that advantage had to be taken of any place large enough to pitch the tent for the night. Annie Rowan Clearing, at the junction of the Wolgan and Annie Rowan Creek, was the best camp site available anywhere on the whole journey, but after that there was nothing till we reached the lower reaches of the river. Annie Rowan is very attractive ; it is similar to the well-known Konangaroo Clearing at the junction of the Cox and Kanangra Rivers, and, although it is much smaller, the gigantic cliffs which hem the valley in at this point give it a far better setting.

The only other really good camp site met with on the trip was at Hungryway Creek, some days' walk further downstream and not far from Upper Colo. This was very acceptable after continuous hacking through scrub and camping in nooks and crannies which were hardly large enough for the tent, but it heralded our approach to open spaces and civilization, and meant the end of the trip. From this camp we took a short cut over a big bend of the river by following a track over the mountain nearby, and avoided the sandy stretches of river bank which lie above Armstrong's Orchard, the first habitation to be met on the journey downstream.

From this outpost a road led our weary steps to Upper Colo, four miles away, and we were then in settled farming country, through which a main road runs to the Hawkesbury and Richmond. This meant the end of our adventures in a rugged and little frequented part of the Mountains. For that we were regretful.

Do you know which clubs were responsible for the formation of the New South Wales Federation of Bush Walking Clubs ?

The inaugural meeting was held on 21st July, 1932, at 5 Hamilton Street, Sydney, in a room lent by The Sydney Bush Walkers. The foundation members were the Mountain Trails Club of New South Wales, the Sydney Bush Walkers, the Hikers' Club of Sydney—which has changed its name to the Rucksack Club (Sydney, N.S.W.)—the Workers' Educational Association Ramblers' Club, Y.W.C.A. Ramblers' Club (which withdrew in 1937), the Bush Tracks Club (which withdrew in 1940), and the Bushlanders' Club of New South Wales.

GREAT SMALL HILLS.

The Queensland Glasshouse Group.

By GEORGE W. KENYON.

(The Coast and Mountain Walkers of New South Wales.)

Although in Australia there is much very rugged country, there are no high mountains which resemble the lofty jagged peaks of Europe. Yet here and there are rocky formations which, although not measurably high, give one an impression of inaccessibility and of lofty detachment from the level of our regular place of existence. Those who are fond of hills, yet misguided enough to estimate their value by altitude in feet, have missed a great deal by ignoring these small ones. What they lack in height is often offset by their proportions, the precipitous nature of their walls, and by the very intimacy of our association with them.

CROOKNECK, WITH BEERWAH ON THE LEFT.
(Photo. by G. W. Kenyon.)

Overflowing with artistic, geological and recreational interest are the Glasshouse Mountains of South Queensland, barely fifty miles north of Brisbane and quite close to the coast. The old explosive type of volcano which existed in that area has completely disappeared, leaving only these trachytic plugs to present a really unique sight. Accentuating this air of unreality are the names—for who can fail to be fascinated by such as Miketeebumulgrai, of 648 feet, the smallest hill, or perhaps Tibberoowuccum of 750 feet, or Tunbubudla (The Twins) of 1020 feet and 1100 feet respectively.

The proportions of Coonowrin (or Crookneck), 1170 feet, from an easterly viewpoint, are most pleasing and uniquely symmetrical with almost vertical walls. Its summit, however, when seen from the north, appears to be tilted, which no doubt accounts for its curious nickname. While the regular route to the summit affords good climbing but no difficulty, other routes may necessitate so much "fly on the wall" performances as to discourage all but the most adventurous climbers. As interesting on account of its massiveness as Coonowrin is for its slenderness, Tibrogargan, of 1160 feet, is one of the most important. It is little more than a walk up a steep grade to the summit from the western side, although the eastern face is quite different, being bare, almost vertical and of great height. Beerwah, 1819 feet, the highest of the group, is somewhat conical in form, with sides at approximately 45° to the horizontal, tapering off to a very sharp point.

A SUNRISE PANORAMA.

From the narrow rocky summit of Ngungun, 810 feet, one obtains a splendid view in every direction of the remainder of the group, particularly Coonowrin, showing its slenderness to the best advantage. From this airy perch one can see a sunrise which in its early effect is quite unlike those seen elsewhere, and a glorious climax to an early rising and enjoyable climb in the dawning. On a clear, still June morning we saw the rays of the sun, as it rose from beyond the sea, strike Beerwah first, its slender tip commencing to glow as though it were metal being heated. Slowly the light crept down the mountain side until the summit of Coonowrin became golden. Looking to the south we saw Tibrogargan receiving a touch of light, and then the lower hills, in order of altitude, were similarly treated. One felt that, here, Nature was playing the part of a lamp-lighter, attending to each great lamp in turn, until the whole countryside was aglow with light and warmth.

Although materially most interesting, these hills are spiritually invaluable. Their unnatural shapes, detachment from all other ranges, their air of immobility, cause one to think of the tremendous volcanic forces which suddenly stopped, allowing wind and rain in infinite time to bring about the exposure of things that were once hidden. As the last patch of sunlight has dwindled on the highest hill, it is felt that these darkening rocks are reverently being cloaked by Nature so that their original obscurity may be recaptured, and in their semi-darkness they appear, in the peace that has crept in, apart from the world of man.

FEDERATION REUNION CAMP.

The second annual Federation Reunion Camp, held at the junction of the Nepean River and Fitzgerald's Creek on the 1st and 2nd November, 1941, was, like its predecessor of February, 1940, an unqualified success.

Over 200 walkers, comprising members of affiliated clubs and visitors, gathered for the excellent barbecue and camp-fire concert on Saturday night. The rock-climbing demonstrations on Sunday were very popular.

The perfect weather, Paddy's efficient organising committee, and the co-operative spirit shown by all present combined to make the week-end a memorable and happy one.

SHOALHAVEN DAYS.

Depression Memories.

By FRANK A. CRAFT.

(The Warrigal Club of New South Wales.)

There might have been gold in the Shoalhaven country at one time, but the unlucky depression prospectors of the early nineteen-thirties found very little of it. The variety of people on the track was remarkable. Most travelled in strange old cars containing possessions which varied from shovels to children and dogs, although there were occasional swagmen who seized on old houses and set up group housekeeping on a meagre scale. There were also people with strange and wonderful machines for saving gold, who aimed at making a living from the dumps left by old-time Chinese ; this tribe carried its machinery on lorries, and sometimes met the declining plutocrat who was trying to find profit for his remaining capital. The eyes of both were soon enlightened !

Nerriga was the rallying point in the Shoalhaven uplands as being the one place which boasted an hotel and a tiny store. The former retailed beer for cash or gold dust, whilst the latter was run by a little old wrinkled man who enticed the unwary into his den, where he treated them to lectures on the evils of strong drink and to the strange cosmological views of his sect. In between times he displayed small pieces of Shoalhaven gold. In one way and another the new arrival learned of the latest gold finds, both real and imaginary, and departed hopefully northwards for Nuggetty Gully and fortune !

The sight of the gully was one of the strangest possible, as there were dozens of improvised sieves at breast height each mounted on four ricketty legs. The fine dust which filtered through was collected and "dry-blown" in camp a mile or so away down by the only trickle of water on these Saharan ridges.

It did not take the city man long to become disgusted with conditions, although a few were reputed to find small nuggets of gold. He usually packed up after a brief stay and made for the Shoalhaven, where there was an abundance of water, even though the country had been turned inside out in the early days. The most permanent camps were thus made at Oallen Ford and about Welcome Reefs, where old Mrs. Smith, of fierce aspect and legendary age, strove against all-comers with hard words and home remedies for their bodily ills.

WELL KNOWN IDENTITIES.

Each group of prospectors had its own speciality, and it did not take long to divide them into "shaft experts," "reef experts," and a score of others. Perhaps the most pathetic of the lot was a harmless old devil nicknamed "Loamey," after the favourite word of his prospecting manual. Dirty, bristly, and with a pair of leggings made from sections of the inner tube of a motor tyre, he lived quite alone in a shelter made from branches and odd pieces of kerosene tins. From this centre he went out to prospect with a sack over his back, and he returned more than once laden with fruit obtained by foray on a small cultivation patch away in the hills. The brightest group was the shaft diggers. These were led by the "Count," who looked like the agent of a foreign power who had fallen on evil days, and who was now too poor even to buy a drink. In the same group was

the tall fellow. "Lofty came from Queensland, and he's not used to us yet!" explained one of the others, and indeed he would have looked more in place in the tall timber than amongst the Shoalhaven bush. It was a sight for the gods to see these fellows returning from work. They would collect large stones on the edge of the scrub above a watercourse and then deploy in fine style over the open ground, yelling their hardest and flinging the stones at rabbits, which scampered for the briars in the gully. The group finally dissolved when other prospectors threatened to throw the omniscient Count into his own shaft.

Two other men were wise in their generation. On the road to Nuggetty Gully in a touring car they bumped their way to an old house called "Primrose," where there was a fair well on the edge of an old mining show. Here they established themselves in the relative comfort of a whole roof, and whilst the lame man did the cooking his mate explored the district. The cook entertained a stranger who came armed with butter and bread; at lunch time the two ate fried mushrooms until the explorer returned, to decline his portion. They ate mushrooms until they were incapable of movement, and were left to stare at one another in a glassy way across the wreckage on the table!

"WHISKERS LIKE A RED SUNSET."

Very few took so kindly to the bush as these. White gum trees set on barren ridges could hardly be inspiring to an outcast from the cities, whilst many of the enclosed valleys and gorges are depressing to most folk not used to them. The head of the Shoalhaven is a small scale nursery of eccentrics; very few prospectors came this far, but those who had dug for gold in former days were settled amongst ordinary sheep herders and supplied the most unusual element. Even now it is possible to recall Pat. Hogan coming along the track at the tail of his sheep, with his face showing amongst his whiskers like a red sunset behind a bare hawthorn bush!

The name Snowball on the map gives some hint of the general bleakness of these wild highlands, yet there are beautiful green meadows where the stream rises, gay in Spring with English meadow flowers. A well built slab hut faces the grassland, although it is only occupied by chance drovers or by stragglers from the army of prospectors in depression time. At one stage two brothers from Sydney lived there on tea, damper and treacle; they were more like the English exiles of whom Lawson wrote than our usual idea of Australians, and their gloominess was only matched by the hills when grey clouds hit their tops. These treasure-hunters had been worsted badly in the struggle against the atmosphere of the hills, the lethargic quest for gold, and the eccentricities of people of the settlement frontier, and their stay in the Shoalhaven country was brief.

In some ways, these last were the most characteristic. The depression prospectors were outcasts from the city, town or hamlet; their only retreat was to the places which did not want them—few, indeed, were able to master the hardness of their new surroundings. The ordinary holiday-maker or rambler who ventures into the highlands is still tied to his place in a community, even though he may attempt a temporary escape from it, and he does not start with the feeling of being cut off from his kind; but the Australian countryside is still gaunt and menacing to the person who faces cold, hunger or danger of it if he is an outcast as well. Perhaps the only one who can really claim to understand the outdoors is he who has met these evils and who has overcome them.

PIGEON HOUSE AND BEYOND.

By R. KIRKBY.

(The Sydney Bush Walkers.)

Having just read Marie Byles' "By Cargo Boat and Mountain," I feel a little ashamed of Australia's flat mountains, but Pigeon House, although only 2398 feet high, has some virtues. It was sufficiently outstanding for Captain Cook, out at sea, to remark and name it during his voyage of 1770, but as we neared Drury's farm by car from Milton it played hide-and-seek with us in the moonlight. If anything is needed to heighten one's keenness and excitement on setting out on a trip, a glimpse of a distant peak rearing its form in the frosty air is more than sufficient.

The first morning the frost was wicked, but augured a fine day, and the sun was already warm when we visited Mr. Drury to get directions. The track to the Pigeon House led over a quiet stream through thickly wooded hills, and after an easy climb we were at the foot of the mountain. Rock walls baffled us in our endeavour to reach the top by any but the usual way, for the mountain is merely a residue of sandstone resting on a large earth mound. The cyclorama from the summit is magnificent, embracing all the coastal plain, almost the whole of the Clyde River valley and the Budawang Range. The upper Clyde, hemmed in by continuous forbidding gorges, is, in consequence, particularly enticing.

A short run down the mountain brought us to the Clyde itself, and we made our way up Yadbora Creek, a beautiful tributary of that river flowing in from the west. The tents were pitched right below The Castle, the towering cliffs of which have never, as far as is known, been scaled.

DIFFICULT COUNTRY.

The whole of the following morning was spent in threading our way up Yadbora and Wog Wog Creeks, and after lunch we commenced the ascent of the Budawang Range, which forms the watershed between the Clyde and tributaries of the Shoalhaven. The route recommended to and taken by us marks quite noticeably the division in this tract of country between, to the south, very steep but negotiable ridges like the "Dogs," and, on the northern side, virtually impossible walls like many around Katoomba.

Just over the top of the range we camped in a shallow valley, and those of us with sufficient enterprise to climb the ridge after nightfall were rewarded by seeing the blatant cliffs of the day softened by the moonlight, while in the valleys pools of mists metamorphosed the scene into a rocky archipelago.

The easiest exist now lay down in the valley in which we were camped, but a close inspection of the promising country to the north proved irresistible, and we began by climbing Mount Corang. Our reward was a splendid cyclorama, including many fantastic rock formations. Quite near us was a pyramidal formation known as The Peak, from which an even better view would have been obtained, but we were unable to spare the time to climb it. West of Corang was a maze of sandstone gorges which could have proved difficult, but we had the fortune to choose a well-behaved ridge, which advanced us several miles before dropping into a creek. Shortly afterwards we blundered on to the house of people recently visited by another party of walkers who had been mistaken for "parachutists or wandering minstrels"! We would have been pleased to have been the former, having discovered that we still had eight miles to walk and but an hour and a half to do it in before the official time for boarding the car. The sight of us "doubling" savagely along would not have convinced spectators that we had an unusually pleasurable trip and three days of glorious winter sunshine.

"FREEDOM."

By W. LLEWELLYN RYLAND.

Over the boulders and over the logs,
By haunts of the croaking frogs
That lie in the creeks and muddy bogs,
I run down the mountain side.

By the creek that is murmuring low
Across the flat with a rush I go,
And near the hill where the gum-trees grow
I pause beneath their shade.

Stretched on the grass, I gaze at the sky
That is empty, save for a crow with a cry
Like the bleat of a sheep when about to die,
And I fall asleep in the glade.

"I LIVED ALONE, AND LIKED IT."

By J. G. SOMERVILLE.

(The Coast and Mountain Walkers of New South Wales.)

"So you want to camp alone on Whitsunday Island ! If you take my advice, you won't. You'll be eaten alive by sandflies, and the place is full of death-adders and dingoes !"

Everyone I questioned when I arrived in North Queensland told the same story, with variations according to their imagination. However, obstinacy had its own reward, and I finally found myself aboard the Day Dream Island launch "Gleam" chugging across the choppy Whitsunday Passage dragging a protesting flattie.

THE "GLEAM" OFF WHITSUNDAY ISLAND.
(Photo. by J. G. Somerville.)

Cid Harbour, the spot I had chosen for my eight-day camp, has an interesting past. It was here, upwards of 45 years ago, that the hoop pine which makes the island so picturesque was milled for shipment to Bowen, and the remains of the settlement can still be seen. Old steel rails and a boiler lie rusting in the sand, while a concrete dam is still in good condition. Pineapple, mango, mandarin and paw paw trees, unfruitful, bore mute promise of what might be. Now the island is a National Park and Forest Reserve, and uninhabited except when the Fleet, on manoeuvres, anchors in the deep and protected natural harbour. It is about twelve miles by eight, and its configuration bears a strong resemblance to the British Isles.

When the launch left I set up camp at the back of a small beach in what would have been Wales, a little tremulous as to what my reactions to this self-enforced isolation were going to be. In the

days that followed, I read, ate, swam, fished, sunbaked and generally lived a dream-life of unadulterated laziness which would cause even the most hardened armchair-walker to blush! Between five o'clock and sundown each evening a few sandflies created a public nuisance, but a retreat into long trousers or sleeping bag was quite effective. I saw only one death adder, and, although there were dingo tracks on the next beach, none came near my camp. No bush fire has ever ravaged the island, and one result is the thick carpet of dead leaves which magnifies the sound of every movement. Scrub turkeys and lizards in the daytime and bush rats at night kept up a continual loud rustling. The bush rats in particular were most inquisitive and persistent, and would even come into the tent at night seeking food.

"The weird, plaintive cry of the curlew" was only a meaningless, hackneyed phrase to me until I heard it for the first time. I don't think I've ever had to listen to anything quite so heartrending and depressing- it's too painfully human!

ATTRACTIONS OF THE REEF.

Although actually at one time they formed part of the mainland, and are not real coral atolls, most of the islands of the Whitsunday Group have coral fringes, and "Big Whitsunday," as the locals call it, is no exception. Like everyone else, I had read countless articles about the Barrier Reef, and felt more or less acquainted with the reef before going there. However, realisation exceeded expectation, and I spent many absorbing hours wandering about on them, armed with knife, stick, glove and bag. The coral itself, with its incredible variety of shapes and colours, is entrancing enough, but there are many other things to hold one's interest. Brilliantly coloured fish, repulsive bêche-de-mer, crabs, shells and all manner of marine life exist here in abundance. Dugong and turtles were often visible on the surface of the shallow mangrove-lined bays. Big black-lipped oysters, as long as three inches, were plentiful, but the fishing was poor. Once I felt very primitive when I managed to stalk and spear a stingray, but living off the land was not practicable, as a young couple who tried the experiment some years ago found out to their extreme discomfort.

Each day was like its predecessor, with little or no variety of temperature. The nights were mild, though it was mid-July, and the days warm and sunny, with rarely even a cloud to add contrast to the endless symphony of blue sky, mountain and sea. The rich golden tones of the sunset, set in a foreground of palms, are indelibly impressed on my mind.

Whitsunday Peak (1433 feet) is the highest point of the island, and the second highest mountain in the whole group. I left the ascent until the last day, so that if I met with an accident there would still be some hope. For forty-five minutes I climbed up a rocky creek bed through a magnificent palm jungle, and then forced my way slowly and painfully up a ridge covered with lawyer cane and dense tropical growth. The view amply repaid the mental and physical effort, and was, to my way of thinking, superior to that from Mount Wellington, Tasmania.

When the "Gleam" came to pick me up I had mixed feelings of gladness and sorrow at the prospect of returning to civilisation, and was comforted in knowing that the experiment was a complete success, for I had proved to my entire satisfaction that, given sufficinet interests, it is easy to "live alone and like it."

NATIVE FOOD PLANTS.

By A. H. PELHAM.

(The Warrigal Club of New South Wales.)

The natives of Australia had several varieties of vegetable foods, but in few cases was the supply extensive. It seems that the edible qualities of many plants were not handed on to the white man, and so perhaps a little rather risky research would produce an astonishingly long list of available foods. Machin Hall, in fact, has for years occasionally experimented with plant foods, chiefly berries, on the assumption that if the small first dose did not cause trouble, then the dose might be increased. I know little of his findings. In general, any berry eaten by a bird should be tolerably edible for a human, but its food value might well be small, and in any bulk it might cause digestive disorders. Of course, the animal food = human food equation is only roughly approximate, since, for example, the gum-leaf diet of koalas is quite unsuitable either to our teeth, digestions or palates. Cautious experimenting by intrepid souls is, however, to be encouraged.

In very many cases real food value has been clearly proved. The more readily known of these are listed here. They are all found in the Sydney and Blue Mountains areas.

Grass (*more or less any variety*) : Broth made from boiled grass is nutritive, but unpleasant. The degree of nutritive value would in some cases be very low.

Grass Tree (*Xanthorrea Spp.*) : The white base of the leaves is edible, raw or cooked.

Stinging Nettles : A sound broth or boiled green.

Fat Hen (*Chenopodium murale*) : A good boiled green. This is common, but rare in the bush proper.

Burraweng Palm Nuts (*Macrozamia*) : Very dangerous till laboriously prepared. (See "Wild Life," May, 1941.)

Bracken (*Pteris Spp.; Pteridium Spp.*) : Use growing tips as a boiled green, or boil the tuberous roots.

Wattle : The exuded gum is very palatable. Its food value is doubtful.

Ground Berry (*Astroloma humifusum; A. pinifolium*) : Eat the berries raw.

Five Corners (*Styphelia triflora*) : Eat the berries raw. They are most palatable.

Dumplings (*Billardiera scandens*) : Eat the berries raw. (See Thisle Harris : "Wild Flowers," p. 67.)

Native Cherry (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*) : Eat the berries raw.

Native Currant (*Leptomeria acida*) : Eat the berries raw.

Caladenia Spp. : Cook the little tubers ; this would probably hold for most terrestrial orchids.

Native Hibiscus (*Hibiscus heterophyllus*) : Eat raw shoots, leaves or roots. (See Thistle Harris : "Wild Flowers," p. 35.) This is fairly common in scrub.

Geebung (*Persoonia Spp.*) : Eat the fruits raw.

Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneum*) : Seeds are edible, and the young shoots are all right boiled.

Lillypilly (*Eugenia, most species*) : Eat the fruits raw. (See Thistle Harris : "Wild Flowers," p. 3.)

Native Raspberry (*Rubus rosaefolius*) : A common bramble of the scrub. Eat the fruits raw.

There are many other edible plants and flowers which I have not mentioned, as they are protected in New South Wales under the Wild Flowers and Native Plants Protection Act. The Cabbage Tree Palm (*Livistona australis*), for example, was found to provide a good food, the pulp in the trunk and the growing tips being edible raw or cooked, and its name is derived from its early use as a food by Cook's expedition in 1770. Various varieties of protected tree ferns have likewise been found to provide edible foods, but the use of protected plants is to be deprecated except in a severe emergency.

I have personally survived each of the plants set out in the above list in varying quantities, but there are many left to be tried, especially brush forest berries so beloved of the birds. For those who feel like going further, J. H. Maiden, in "Useful Native Plants of Australia," gives a very long list of edible plants, but mainly lack verification, and their edibility depends at times on vague hearsay alone.

BLUE GUM MEMORIES.

By J. H. WATSON.
(*The Rover Ramblers' Club.*)

It is by no mischance that Blue Gum Forest has become the Mecca of bushwalkers. Situated at the base of precipitous walls, where the waters of Govett's Leap Creek join the Grose, it is a veritable oasis with several means of approach from the outside world. So whilst resting before the fire on a moonlight night in the Forest, with the moonbeams filtering through the trees and casting grotesque shadows, one cannot fail to admire the beauties of Nature and the glory of this wonderland. Gradually one's thoughts dwell on previous visits; and my own thoughts must surely be those of the average bushwalker.

It was in Easter, 1935, that I had my first opportunity of visiting the Forest. I had been intrigued with the story of the circumstances surrounding its dedication, and, with the usual curiosity that impels all bushwalkers to venture into pastures new, I looked forward to the trip. Apart from the Tourist Map, there were then no detailed maps available, but having heard of an old cattle route into the Grose Valley from Perry's Lookdown I felt no qualms as to the journey. So it was that a small party led by "Gunner" Anderson started out in misty rain on the Good Friday, to lunch at the shelter shed then erected at the foot of Hat Hill. Fortunately the weather cleared somewhat as we proceeded along old foot-tracks and watercourses in a vain effort to find a possible route down to the valley below. It seemed that the cattle must have possessed wings; so, disillusioned, we returned to the shelter shed to spend one of those bitterly cold nights for which the spot was famous.

Eventually we returned towards Blackheath in order to descend Rodriguez Pass and follow the ever popular route down Govett's Leap Creek to the Forest, wetting our feet at the inevitable crossings. Some dozen or so other walkers were encamped in the Forest, which then—as now—was an eyeopener. On the Saturday, with Frank Whiddon, I made my first ascent of Perry's, encountering lawyer vines and other obstacles before finally observing a few faint blazes as we neared the top. After a short reconnaissance, we re-

turned to the Forest for a late but welcome lunch. For the balance of the week-end we essayed to explore its wonders, and on the morrow retraced our steps, returning by way of Evans Lookout to Blackheath.

In September, 1935, we welcomed a blueprint by Ninian Melville, and with greater confidence set out from Leura on Anzac Week-end, 1936, with a party of Ramblers led by Paddy Pallin. As we tried to pick up the Mount Hay Road, Paddy asked directions of one ancient local, and was somewhat surprised when he was informed in the now famous words: "I know where you's is going, Sonny!" However, despite the misdirections, we hit the trail, and, after admiring the view from Lockley Pylon, descended Shortredge Pass to the Forest. On this occasion we found to our sorrow the danger of bursting river stones—result, one casualty; and the shortcut back via Perry's.

It had now become an annual pilgrimage, so Anzac, 1937, found a party of us spending a night at the shelter shed above Victoria Falls, and next morning descending via the Falls to the Grose after making an acquaintance with numerous lawyer vines. While inspecting our blueprint we were intrigued by a valley featured to the south of the Grand Canyon, at the head of which was shown Arethusa Falls, which we decided to investigate. After a rough trip up the creek, we eventually stopped at the foot of the Falls for lunch and returned via the Grand Canyon to Blackheath.

Anzac, 1938, soon came round, and, after a fitful night's sleep in the waiting-room at Bell disturbed by passing trains, we set out along Bell's Road for about seven miles seeking the head of Pearce's Pass. We had only been able to gather vague details as to the location of the turn-off, and had Paddy's assurance that two out of every three parties usually missed the turn-off. We were nearly one of the two that missed out, but eventually picked up the track, and, after making a few sketches, made an easy and interesting descent to the Grose, which we followed to the Forest. This time we walked down the Grose for a day and a half before climbing out and following a ridge into Faulconbridge.

ANTI-CLIMAX.

In October, 1938, bushwalkers heaved a sigh of relief with the publication of the Katoomba Military Map. But with it the adventure had gone out of Blue Gum, and regular visits were now made merely to renew acquaintance with its beauties and indulge in reminiscences. In March of this year I made my last visit to the Forest with several walkers. I found that a brand new road runs the complete distance to Perry's Lookdown, while a well-constructed path has been laid to the head of the Pass. The Forest, however, is unchanged, despite the occasional depredations of thoughtless persons, and once again, as I sat before the camp fire, my thoughts wandered to those friends whom I first met in the Forest, but who were now in other parts of the world.

We were disturbed by some loud "Coo-ees," and eventually located two youngsters aged ten and thirteen. They asked the time, and then informed us that they had come down from Perry's to spend the day in the Forest and would return at night via Govett's; in fact, they often came down for the day. So our illusions are shattered when we find youngsters doing a trip in one day which experienced walkers formerly regarded as one to be attempted over a holiday week-end. In very thoughtful frame of mind we climbed up the bridle track to Evans Lookout on our way back to Blackheath.

Truly, time marches on!

FIRE !

By M. F. STODDART.

(The Sydney Bush Walkers.)

A match against the box . . . scratch . . . and lo ! a little miracle. What vision does it bring to you ? Sweeping bushfires ? The grate in your living-room on winter evenings ? Empire Day and showers of crackers ? A gas jet ? The candle in the nursery ?

To me it brings a whole train of memories, some happy, some sad, some just incidental, and some seeming to have a vital significance.

One vision arises of the Deua Valley seen in the gathering dusk from Coonambene Mountain. At irregular intervals along the fading river line are twinkling golden-orange lights. Which one of all those fires is warming my companions of the day, and casting shifting shadows on my bracken-filled tent ? Down which almost vertical spur, I ask myself, must I plunge to land at my tent-flap ? Choosing one at random I confidently set off. The ground beneath my feet has disappeared from sight. I step forward blindly, one moment setting my foot down with unnecessary force, the next falling through space to land on loose slates and broken rock fragments, sliding precariously a few feet further and sending a perfect avalanche down the hillside before me. My hair streams out behind, caught in the blackened fingers of resentful shrubs half killed by fire. On and on, down and down, until it seems I am never to reach that tantalizing half-glimpsed fire. And when, at long last, I did so, covered from head to foot with charry scratches, it proved but a gloriously coloured log, aflame in the pitch black eerie stillness of a deserted bushland. . . . I did not find my friends till 4 a.m. next day. After I had wandered for most of the night, I threw myself down to snatch a few moments of shivering sleep, and thought of that lovely glowing log left miles back in the inky, thorny distance.

* * * * *

Another firelight vision recalls a thundering brown cataract, the Shoalhaven in flood ; drenching rain and benumbed fingers fumbling with damp matches in an unsuccessful attempt to light a fire. Then, when all hope had vanished, and my jaws ached with blowing and my eyes streamed with smoky tears, there came an unexpected invitation to share the blazing brilliance of a fellow-walker's fire. It seemed a miraculous fire, curling hungrily round apparently wet wood, sending cheering, comforting and radiantly penetrating warmth into the tent through the dripping, cavernous darkness.

* * * * *

Again, faces in a great wide ring round about an enormous log fire in Blue Gum Forest. Seventy walkers from many different clubs singing together or listening to various individual items of entertainment. Entertainment in a setting of such strange natural beauty that it could not fail to satisfy. Tall tapering masts of palely gleaming bluegums pointing to the deep blue sky etched with delicate leaf patterns and lit by faint stars. Dancing columns of burning sparks flying upwards as some voluntary stoker rises to move the crimson logs, looking as he gazes narrow-eyed into the furnace, like some quaint goblin from a fairy workshop.

The memory which comes most vividly to me when a match is struck in the darkness is of an occasion when, having just spent eight hours alone without a light in Colong Caves, I was rescued and led out to find the valley alight with colour and life although it was night time. A fire had been lighted below the Cave, and I was amazed to find how vivid and changeable were the myriad tones discovered for me by the leaping flames in rock, fern and tree-trunk, and in the bright clothes of my anxious friends. I will remember, when I hear a match scraped on its box, how I longed for one that day. How I rubbed a handful of my straw hat along my boot till my hand was red-hot and blistered, and unavailingly flogged one sprigged sole against the other without producing the suggestion of a spark. I will remember, and repeat to myself my vow : Never to be without the means of making—A FIRE !

YOUTH HOSTEL ASSOCIATION.

The National Fitness Council of New South Wales expects shortly to launch a Youth Hostel Association in this State. Under this scheme simple accommodation and meals will be available at a low cost at a series of sites linking up walks in the more accessible country districts.

More progress has been made in Victoria, where, in a little over a year, an association of 300 individual members and fifteen organisations as group members, with sixteen hostels, has been built up.

"THE JUNIOR TREE WARDEN."

We have just received a copy of "The Junior Tree Warden" for the year 1940-1941, which is published by the Australian Forest League under the editorship of Miss Thistle Y. Harris, B.Sc., who is well known in botanical and conservation circles. The journal, which has been published for some years past, presents many new and interesting features of our indigenous tree flora in an attractive light appealing to the general reader equally with the botanist. Most intriguing of all is the chapter devoted to "Australian Plants Away from Home," in which, with the aid of excellent photographs, the growth of some of our better known trees in foreign countries is illustrated. Scenes of a glorious avenue of Eucalypts in Benghazi, where major armies recently clashed in fierce warfare, and of a Blue Gum Forest in Addis Ababa, Abyssinia, add more than the usual degree of interest to the magazine, and bring to us a proud realisation of the value and importance of our tree flora and national forests.

The Schools Branch of the Australian Forest League, and Miss Harris as its secretary, have done good work in the past in educating the youth of Australia, or at least of this State, into a proper appreciation of the value of our natural heritage; and their part in the general work of conservation also deserves special mention. It can be confidently asserted that the future will find them equally willing to carry on its expressed objects of "training Australian children to a true understanding of their civic responsibilities by an appreciation of their own tree flora."

We all fervently wish the League every success in its aims.

THE NEW SOUTH WALES FEDERATION OF BUSH WALKING CLUBS.

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The Coast and Mountain Walkers of N.S.W.
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Information regarding any of the above Clubs or Committees may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary of the Federation: Miss Dorothy Song, P.O. Box 7, Q.V. Building, Sydney.

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