

The BUSHWALKER

1943



NUMBER SEVEN • ONE SHILLING •

THE N.S.W. FEDERATION OF BUSH WALKING CLUBS

By JOHN BLOM (Rover Ramblers' Club) Assistant Editor.

Although the Federation's activities during the past year have been somewhat restricted and attendance of delegates at the meetings has not been as high as in the past because of other war activities, the work has nevertheless gone ahead.

The chief interest of the year has centred around the Youth Hostel movement and its relationship to the bushwalking movement. Since its inception there have been several bushwalkers on the Youth Hostel Planning Committee of the National Fitness Council (now the Youth Hostels Association), notable among these being Mr. "Paddy" Pallin. However, none of these was a delegate to the Federation, with the result that it was not kept in touch with the growth of the new movement. Considerable criticism arose when a hostel was erected at Little Marley and the Federation then decided to take an active interest. We now have two official representatives on the Youth Hostel Association and its extensions committee is largely composed of bushwalkers. It is hoped that in the future the Federation will be of assistance to the Hostel Movement and in this regard a motion was approved at its recent Annual Conference that the Federation extend its co-operation to the Youth Hostel Association.

The Conservation Bureau of the Federation was active during the year and, partly in conjunction with the Recreational Areas Committee of the National Fitness Council, has either completed or put in progress some major items.

Definitions of various kinds of reserves as at present understood by the Lands Department were ascertained and definitions for different types of roadless areas proposed. Maps were prepared showing various suggested roadless areas in the vicinity of Sydney.

Several other conservation projects were investigated during the year but, for various reasons, have been temporarily abandoned. Amongst these was a suggestion that the Federation take up the lease of the lands at Era with the idea of eventually adding these to Garrawarra Park, but the value was found to be too high for our resources. Efforts were also made to have the block of land owned by Mr. Hordern adjoining the Blue Gum Forest added to the reserve. Although Mr. Hordern expressed concern for its conservation and promised to give his trustees power to dedicate it after his death, he would not promise to direct them to do so.

An attempt to have a bushwalker appointed to the National Park Trust was unsuccessful as the number of trustees is restricted by law and there is at present no vacancy.

During the year the Federation took advantage of an offer of Wrigley's Ltd. and provided three short broadcast talks on conservation and bushwalking.

Again this year the Annual Camp was held on Heathcote Creek and, in spite of all difficulties, a good attendance was registered.

That small but indefatigable band of workers known as the Bushwalkers' Services Committee is still making fortnightly postings to clubmates in the Fighting Forces and Auxiliaries. Each week the mails bring back letters of appreciation of the magazines, pictures, letters, etc., received. These voluntary workers are to be congratulated upon the way in which they are maintaining postings in spite of ever-increasing difficulties in obtaining magazines and photographs.

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MAJOR —, Aust. Inf. Bn.: The order placed with your firm for 24 tents, Queensland pattern, arrived in good order on 18th Oct. The above battalion wish to place a further order for 12 (twelve) Willesden Queensland tents.

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Naturally military demands come first. No wonder Paddy-made Gear is in short supply.

PADDY PALLIN

327 GEORGE STREET, SYDNEY

PHONE: B3101

CAMP GEAR FOR WALKERS

The Bushwalker

No. 7

1943

PUBLISHED ANNUALLY BY
THE NEW SOUTH WALES
FEDERATION OF BUSH WALKING CLUBS

President: Mr. W. S. WATSON.

Vice-President:

Hon. Treasurer:

Miss D. LAWRY.

Mr. O. WYNDHAM.

Hon. Secretary: Miss MARIE BYLES.

3 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE.

Editor:

Miss DOROTHY LAWRY.

Assistant Editor:

Business Manager:

Mr. JOHN BLOM.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
THE N.S.W. FEDERATION OF BUSH WALKING CLUBS. By John Blom	1
EDITORIAL	5
ABOVE BOUDDI HEADLAND. By Marie B. Byles	6
WALKING IN WARTIME. By Frank A. Craft	6
MURRUMBIDGEE MEANDERINGS. By Frances Stoddart	9
OUR BARRINGTON TRIP. By Bill Watson	11
SNOW COUNTRY RESERVE	12
SNOWFLAKES. By "Klister"	15
A RAMBLER'S SYRIAN WANDERINGS. By Sgt. Rory Lofts	17
ON KINGFISHERS. By Machin Hall	20
MOUNTAIN MEMORIES. By Dot English	23
RECONSTRUCTION AND PLANNING: SOME ASPECTS OF CONSERVATION IN ENGLAND AND AUSTRALIA. By R. Elsie Mitchell	27
"BUT FIRST THE ALP . . ." By George W. Kenyon	29
"ROOKY DAYS." By "Rooky"	33
WORKERS WANTED	35
ON GETTING LOST. By Tod Sloane	36
INFINITY OF BLUE. By 97658	38
SCOTTISH INTERLUDE. By Flying-Officer J. W. Edwards	39
GREETINGS. By E. ("Ted") Caines Phillips	43

The Bushwalker

TO OUR CLUBMATES IN THE FIGHTING
FORCES ON ALL FRONTS.

Wartime difficulties have delayed publication, but here at last is "The Bushwalker" No. 7 to bring you Greetings from your old friends and memories of your old haunts. Your share in the fight for freedom has taken you to new scenes, but we know from your letters, and from the articles some of you have written for us, that you still spend your leave in the same old way—bushwalking.

We cannot express in words the admiration and gratitude we feel for the splendid job you are all doing; we can only work to produce and send you the planes, munitions and supplies you need to carry out that job. Some of us spend all our spare time in the V.D.C., but most of us, like you, enjoy our leave in the old way—bushwalking.

Owing to your absence, some of the smaller clubs are temporarily out of action, but the remaining members of all the clubs are drawing closer together, and the Federation still functions. As always, we bushwalk for pleasure and health, of course; but, as always, we are quick to see any destruction of the bush by vandals or commercial interests and to report the matter; and, as always, the Federation takes prompt action.

Shortage of manpower is holding up the work that has to be done in the Lands Department before new parks can be dedicated. You will be glad to hear, though, that a number of State Ministers are interested in this national work of conservation; that there have been recent additions to the bodies actively working for reservations along very similar lines to our Federation; and that, as a result of the combined efforts of the enthusiasts, some large areas will be added to the nation's parks when the war ends and the surveyors come home.

Co-operation is still the motto of bushwalkers, and a helping hand is extended to the new Youth Hostels Association and its members as well as to the youngsters who are growing up and joining our bushwalking clubs. The more experienced walkers are teaching them bushcraft and our traditions of preserving unspoiled the beauty of our country. Thus the well-worn tracks will be used, and unofficially policed, by an ever-growing number of bushwalkers and other nature lovers.

We are considerably encouraged in our work by the knowledge that at last the ideal of conservation is starting to spread through the community. Though peace is still "round the next bend" we are looking forward to the time when we shall be meeting you on the tracks again, the tracks leading to those lovely, oft-remembered spots—still undamaged by war, unspoiled by man—where you will find sanctuary from your memories of war and, with us, gather strength for the tasks of peace.

DOROTHY LAWRY (Sydney Bush Walkers), Editor.

... Bushwalking and life in the out o' doors has helped us to keep fit. Not merely to be in that neutral state of health that enables us to avoid sickness but to be so full of health and vigour that we can cheerfully face whatever is ahead with courage and resolution.



COX'S RIVER, NEAR KONANGAROO.

—J. W. Edwards (Y.M.C.A. Ramblers).

ABOVE BOUDDI HEADLAND.

By MARIE B. BYLES (Bush Club and S.B.W.).

A Sabbath calm drops from an azure sky
 As soft and sweet as flowers of love in mist,
 And, cradled in that calm, a pink-starred moor
 Drops to a tranquil silent sea, sun-kissed.

A perfect scene whose peace is absolute,
 And nothing knows of all the hate and war,
 Which tear the ruined hearts of shattered men
 Upon that sapphire ocean's far-off shore.

Oh man! who first of living things, found eyes
 To see a beauty never seen before,
 Find thou the sight to see the strength of love,
 Find thou the vision of a further shore.

WALKING IN WARTIME.

By FRANK A. CRAFT (Warrigal Club of N.S.W.).

It's hard to realise that the war has now lasted four years. It is really that long since the military sniffed delicately, said more or less politely—"What, a mere civilian geographer? Can one use such things in the Army?" and told the enquirer to get on with his job. For quite a while life and walking went on much as ever. There was little difference between Easter, 1939, when the record parties of walkers took car from Blackheath, were halted at the boggy patch a couple of miles on the wrong side of Cunnyngname's and then ploughed on foot through the mud of the construction towards Kanangra Walls, and the Easter of a year or two later when the migration took place along Narrow Neck. That was the time when a couple of parties camped near the Corral Swamp and passed the hours of night in recounting their several walking careers in all their gory fullness and when, if report is true, an occasional cuss word filtered up the swamp to disturb the peace of the mixed parties camped near the track.

Walking continued, although it became increasingly difficult to get parties as one and then another of the regulars joined up or found his way into a war job in another State. "The Dogs" were gradually deserted; the tracks, swept by fire in that awful summer at the beginning of 1939, were blotted out by the grass and scrub which followed; the cattle went from Kanangra River, and many a pleasant sidling disappeared under the bracken and thistles. Yet there was one record of progress: the new edition of Taro's ladder at the end of Clear Hill will not wear out in a hurry, and there is a short-cut down Carlon's Head which can be used by experienced walkers not equipped with prehensile tails or with suction pads on their feet.

It was during the war period that I teamed up with Neil Summons whose efforts to get into the A.I.F. were finally ended when he was thrust into the militia. Neil has flat feet; the Army says he cannot march. His first effort as a bushwalker was the Leura-Blue Gum-Blackheath circuit, which he ended in a day by paddling happily up Govett's Leap, rain falling on his bare back, and he singing through it all. The partnership was born to good luck. We traversed the gully down to Erskine Creek in the last of the daylight after a stirring march against time from Glenbrook; on a couple of occasions we made the Devil's Hole in the last glimmer of daylight when we had no torches, and I don't think either of us will forget the

trek down the Grose from Hartley Vale platform on a short Saturday afternoon, when we reached the camping place at Victoria Falls Creek just on dark. Perhaps I did haze Neil on the track, but I still think there was no excuse for his saying that the water was warm, thus causing me to throw myself full length in its icy wetness, only to find out later that he had not touched it so much as with the tip of his finger.

There is such a thing as inspirational walking, especially when in a hurry in cliff country. There need only be one madman in a party to say "Why are we on this highway? I reckon we could get to the top just here, and save all that plugging round the hills. Come on, don't be a pack of dingoes!" If he takes the first step he is never short of company, which he later curses for its sheer brainlessness in following such an idiotic route. Most of our recent explorations in the upper Grose have followed this principle, starting from the railway line.

Some of the unofficial ways up are quite good; we trained the bull terrier in cliff climbing on them. The technique is simple. The climber places the pup on a ledge as far above his head as he can manage, scrambles up beside her, passes her up the next stage and so on. It is a revelation to see the degree of concentrated sadness and worry that can appear on the face of a terrier thus suspended between the heights above and the depths below! She only missed her footing once, when she stepped gracefully over a twenty-foot precipice on the knife edge of Mt. Solitary, rolled down a couple of hundred feet of talus below the cliff, and finally scrambled back with nothing worse than a scratch or two on her jaw—all this without a yelp of protest. Such adventures were fortunately rare.

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Neil only objected to his share once, when he stopped on a fifty-degree shale slope below a sandstone cliff, with a howling gale whipping the downpour from a thunderstorm fair down the back of his neck, and moved an amendment to the title which his wife-to-be had fastened on me in an act of crowning injustice: he moved that the title be preceded by the Australian adjective! I still think we could have climbed up that gully, and some day when I have proved it one way or the other and given the world an original map of the place, the nearby crag will be named "Maniac Point." Then you will know where it is.

In due course I became an A.R.P. warden. This limited walking to a day at a time, and when the train schedule went to glory Saturday had to replace Sunday. Circuits became the only possible walks, and a slight mistake in timing meant catching the "lost souls express" back to Lithgow very late in the evening—a funereal ending to any trip. It's amazing how much can be done in a day by a man travelling light; the circuit from Hartley Vale platform to Blue Gum and Blackheath is quite reasonable, and there are three or four ways from Katoomba to Wentworth Falls, touching the Cox at the foot of Black Dog en route. Such walking provides an antidote for the feeling of growing out of the game, and gives some hope for better times after the war.

What will walking be like then for the veterans of the pre-war clubs, either the professionals, like the ex-storekeeper from Rydal who has hiked over Libya, Syria, Greece, and the Owen Stanleys, or those of us who have had to keep our amateur standing in Australia? A week ago I had a note from Mac.:—"The boys are still talking about those days on Erskine Creek; when are you taking them to St. Helena?" There must be plenty of these fifteen-year-olds ready for the track, only needing a few picked walks and a bit of seeing how it's done in order to become real enthusiasts: no cast-iron rules, no lecturing on club spirit, but the comradeship of the track and the camp fire, and a due reverence for all that moves, or grows, or has its being in the bush.

Perhaps Bert Symons will have us all in the National Fitness Scheme. When that happens, I hope he will be one of the party camping with me on that little knoll across the swamps from Jagungal, to tell me again about the timber-getters at Bungwahl, or the foaming tankard at Richmond. In any case, I cannot imagine the walkers of the present day letting their ways and tradition die like those which belonged to the walkers in that far-off "golden age" at the beginning of this century, and I think there will be more to walking than travelling the same routes over again with a few good companions of the old set.

Some years ago the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council did a great deal of "spade work" on a project for a very large Blue Mountains National Park and this Federation made it the main objective of its conservation policy. As a first instalment, in 1942 a deputation to the Minister for Lands obtained his promise to set aside two extensive areas for survey and dedication after the war.

During 1943 local residents, led by the Blue Mountains Shire Council, have put forward a scheme (which includes those two areas) to reserve all unalienated land in the nearer Blue Mountains—about 500 square miles. This plan has also been received sympathetically by the Minister and we look forward to the actual dedication of this park after the war.

MURRUMBIDGEE MEANDERINGS.

By FRANCES STODDART (W.A.A.A.F. and S.B.W.).

For twelve months now I have watched the cycle of changing seasons on the Murrumbidgee where it wriggles its snakey way in and out of Wagga Wagga. On the map it must resemble the Disney sound track. Each full curve has its accentuation in a billabong on the inner or outer side. The swift, brown water swishes across the shingles on wide bends, gurgles over and under great fallen trees where the banks are undercut, and divides every here and there to circle some small island. The billabongs are sometimes dry hollows, sometimes full, quiet pools, covered with wild duck and surrounded by enormous, aged river-gums. Flocks of sulphur-crested cockatoos or pink and grey galahs make the air busy with their curious chatter. Little moorhens utter their startling note every now and then as they skim in and out of the shallows in search of minute delicacies.

Almost every quiet stretch of the river has its fleet of black swans. Silently, gracefully, they come sailing round the corner, dreaming along the shining water as though they had no part in the everyday world but were gracious spirits of the river unwilling to leave their beloved element. In flight they are otherwise. They lift to about eight feet above the surface and fly heavily, though easily, along the river's windings, exploring each reach for friends or fresh hunting places. Their great wings are tipped with white, and their slender necks, red-billed, are thrust toward their goal.

Many a sunny day I have spent on the green banks of some musical stretch of water, basking in the sun while all nature seems to come out to play. A hare comes trotting along toward me like a friendly little dog. He does not see me because I do not move, and the wind is blowing toward me. He passes within a few feet. A wagtail is conducting a skirmish on the wet sand. He pounces on some infinitesimal scrap of nourishment, swallows it, struts, flirts his tail, pirouettes in exaggerated self-esteem, and hops a little further to continue his insatiable search.

Overhead, against the be-powder-puffed sky, a hawk hesitates and slides on invisible wires. His brown-barred wings scarcely move as he tips this way and that and veers off across the tree-tops.

These trees are wonderful. Round each great, knotty bole the floods have washed a hollow. They are all shapes and sizes. Some are magnificently straight and upright; some support a great number of branches, all leaving the parent trunk close together and spreading fanwise above the ground. Others have succumbed to the struggle against wind and flood and lie battered and recumbent but far from lifeless, their branches a tortuous example of their tenacity and upward aim. Some stand unflinchingly by the brink while the relentless river tears from their bases the last grain of sand, when, like Ozymandias, their majesty will be laid low.

Close to the town, in the summer, the banks are green thickets of willow and white wisteria-tree. The essence of coolth and lazy comfort lurks in these green recesses. The river banks echo the laughter of the bathers. Small canoes shoot along effortlessly down river, returning arduously. Splashes mark the favourite diving places. The heat becomes more and more intense, and the bathing continues far into the night, when the floodlit water is alight with colour and life.

As the summer wanes the willows change and glow with palest gold. The poplars lose their thick green rustle and scatter their vivid leaves along the river drive. The fields and little hills, once orange with sun-daisies, turn straw-coloured, and then brown. The shining

etubble flattens in the fields and the nights lengthen and become bleak. Soon all trace of autumn is lost. The leafless willows commence their drear vigil. The ducks on the lagoon seem hungrier and less timid. Gradually the green covers the lawns and fields. The hills change from brown to grey, and then by imperceptible degrees become luxuriously verdant. A mist lies along the billabongs and wreathes the chimneys of the town, and the frost whitens the blades of grass in every spare allotment.

This is the time for long swift bicycle rides, for hilarious gallops on horse back, when the wind stings the cheeks and causes every face to glow, every eye to stream and every appetite to increase to alarming proportions. Picnics are the order of the day. Over a pungent fire, great slabs of steak sizzle and lose their royal colour. Amid shrieks of laughter and groans of despair sausages wriggle off the grid and dive into the red-hot ash. The billy boils benignantly amid the rampant flames, humming its cheerful song with squat black assurance.

Save in the circling planes, no hint of war enters these fresh retreats. Surcease from care, rest from labour, render our return to work a pleasant thing. Feeling like giants refreshed, and having become one unit in cemented friendship, we resume our daily tasks with a lightness of heart which makes for their easy and swift accomplishment.

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OUR BARRINGTON TRIP.

By BILL WATSON (Rover Ramblers Club).

Nearly every walker I have ever yarned with around a camp fire can relate the details of at least one walk he has been on—one which seems to stick in his memory above all others. The walk that lives in my memory is the one we did during Easter, 1941—to Barrington Tops. Many walkers have done this trip—it has been talked about, lectured about, and written about by the tougher types of walker who first explored this area for walking. Our walk wasn't going to be tough nor was it to be original, we were going to do a "sissy" walk along tracks all the way.

We were of the crowd that left Sydney on the Thursday night. The train was over an hour late, due to Mr. Hartigan forgetting to provide an engine for it. We eventually got one, and moved off. The trip to Dungog was spent partly in the luggage rack, partly on the floor of the dogbox. One can't sleep in that rack—it's too tight. The annexe made a better bedroom. Dawn had not yet cracked when we hit the town. We piled into the bus (such as it was) with a mob of S.B.W.'s and hit the track for Hancock's on the Allyn River. The trip was uneventful—apart from those in the back seat being almost gassed by carbon monoxide; the boulder-like cobbles in the road and the patches of bog along the river. The bus ptered out at Hancock's mill, and spilled us all out to unwind the muscles in our legs. A spot of breakfast soon put us into walking shape.

Before we start, let me introduce the party. There was a Nev., a John, two Jack's and two Bill's—one of these being by profession a butcher. I forget which one first sampled the famous Barrington Stinging Trees. However, we called them something—"B— No. 1" (there were several more B's, hence the number)—and were not bitten again.

All Friday, we followed the track leading up Mt. Williams to Carey's Peak. On the way we played see-saw with the S.B.W. party, who were hot on the trail. Bill was the water diviner, and located water at every point indicated on the map. After climbing at least 4,000 feet, we reached the shed near Carey's Peak and settled down to grill unto ourselves some nice juicy steaks. Uhmhhh...

On Saturday morn, we climbed up to the Sundial on Carey's, and viewed the scenery. Over on the left we could make out Mt. Williams, and behind it the Williams River valley. Over on the right we could see a high, winding ridge on which were three peculiar hills. The first had three big humps, the second stuck straight up like a slab of cheese; the third, about seven miles away—labelled Mt. Allyn on the map—had a big bald patch of grass on the northern face. That ridge settled it—it looked inviting—one just had to follow it. To run up and down the knobs, and to scratch Allyn's bald patch. We bade the S.B.W.'s farewell, and made for the ridge. We went down and down, then up and up to the top of the very first knob. Then down—right into about a quarter of a mile of lawyer vines, unanimously named "B— No. 2"; down and up to the next knob; down and up to the next knob. I must say there was plenty of variety.

That ended the first big hill. The next saddle, which looked so easy from Carey's, was precipitous on both sides. After several near accidents, we made the bottom of the saddle. The water diviner failed to divine, so we had to have a dry (and hot) lunch. Jack, who insists on eating the outside leaves of the lettuce and throwing the centre away, joined Nev in eating a battered, leathery looking article which had not seen water for three days—he didn't soak his lettuce.

The next hill was christened "B— No. 3." It rose sheer and seemed to be made of big stones piled up by a giant who wanted to

THE BUSHWALKER

see how many he could get on end before it fell over. From the northern point of this hill, one could obtain a panoramic view of more than 300 degrees, trees on the hill obscuring the last 60 degrees.

Nev. has one bad habit. He insists on throwing stones (large ones) over cliffs. Here, he let himself go—until stopped by the rest of the party, who were afraid of the instability of the hill, and expected a landslide at any time.

With some difficulty, we managed to descend into the next saddle, and made camp just as dark was closing in. The mutton mauler lived up to his reputation, and successfully located water some distance down the valley on the eastern side. Around the campfire we congratulated ourselves on being one of the first to reach such an inaccessible spot. We need not have wasted time. Next morning, five yards away, we saw a sawn off tree stump.

We climbed our weary way up the slopes of Mt. Allyn, and at long last crossed that tantalising bald spot, which we could see from Carey's Peak. From now on, we followed ridge after ridge leading down in the general direction of Hancock's timber mill, which we made in the late afternoon. After a long yarn with Mr. Hancock himself, we were pointed out the track leading over the range to the Williams River. We set out. Half way up the hill, we struck trouble. Jack, of lettuce fame, went stiff in the legs, and we had to take turns helping him and carrying his pack. Up-hill was O.K.: downhill, he had to walk backwards. Never was a camp more welcome than the one at the end of that hill.

Monday morning came with barely two miles to Barrington House. All the billies went on the fire, and turn by turn we had a bucketful of hot water showered over us by the odd man out from a convenient log. Thus, shaven and bathed, we ended our walk at Barrington House, where we again met the S.B.W., waiting for the bus to take us back to Dungog.

So ended our walk. It wasn't spectacular, it wasn't particularly tough, it wasn't anything out of the box, but it does live in all our memories as one of the best walks we have ever had.

They clambered up into a land bereft
Of landmark, time, and firm reality,
By swirling mists that held them in captivity. . . .
D.L. (S.B.W.).

SNOW COUNTRY RESERVE.

It is with very deep satisfaction that the Federation has learned of the formation of a national reserve in the snow country of this State covering an area of approximately one and a quarter million acres. It is now known that this huge area is to be set aside as a National Park, thanks largely to the efforts of the Premier, Mr. McKell.

The area is centered on Kiandra and extends south to the Victorian border and northwards to between Gundagai and Canberra, embracing Mt. Kosciusko, Yarrangobilly and the headwaters of the Snowy, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Tumut and other river systems.

The survey of the area has now been completed and, although snow leases and permissive occupancies will still be allowed for six months of the year, the conditions of the leases will be more severe than hitherto. The lessees will be obliged to destroy the rabbits which have increased in the area, but otherwise the park will be made a sanctuary for bird and animal life, with free access for the public.



"LET'S TRY!"

—W. Mulligan (R.R.C.).

PRETTY SALLY MOUNTAIN.

—R. Alder (S.B.W.).



SNOWFLAKES.

By "KLISTER" (Rucksack Club, Sydney, N.S.W.).

It was Saturday afternoon and the welcome sun of the bright winter afternoon flooded the sheltered lawn. Propped against the garage wall stood a pair of skis with the third coat of lacquer drying on the running surfaces. The bindings had been cleaned and overhauled, and the Kandahar cables sparkled in the sunlight. Nearby stood the stocks—they had not been neglected—and the big ski boots were receiving a final polish. Next week-end their owner would commence annual leave and so—

* * * * *

On Wednesday night the rucksack came down off the top of the lowboy. All the bushwalking gear was emptied out and in its place went ski waxes, spare binding, a piece of metal edge, sun cream, snow goggles, a good supply of chocolate, some biscuits, a tin of dubbin, woollen mittens, heavy woollen socks, flannel shirts and pyjamas, and a pair of slippers. From the pile of bushwalking equipment were added the ground sheet, sleeping bag, candle, matches, medical kit, a billy, some sugar and tea, the camera, films and filters, and a piece of cord. Soap, toothbrush and other sundries completed the packing—weight, 30 lbs.

* * * * *

The Friday evening papers reported snow on the Blue Mountains. A cold, gusty wind swept the concourse at Central Railway Station. The few people gathered there drew their overcoats closer about them. Several figures, each with rucksack and skis, paused before the indicator. To them the weather gave promise of beautiful powder snow high on the Alps. This time to-morrow night they would be, perhaps, six thousand feet up in that snowy fairyland sitting snug and warm before the hut fire—perhaps. There was always the uncertainty of the Snow Country to be considered it is true, but then there were numerous huts and they were on holidays and not bound to timetables once they reached the foothills of the Alps. But now—they passed along the windy platform, left their skis in the brake-van and boarded the comfortable sleeper.

* * * * *

Pine trees and elves—or were they people in peaked caps? A long wait for breakfast with a seat by the log fire in the comfortable lounge or a brisk walk in the crisp morning sunshine. Rolled oats, poached eggs, marmalade and toast, coffee, and "the bus leaves in five minutes."

Good humour, rugs, deep seats, a big bus, bleached upland grasses, sheep, and snow caps in the distance.

A crisp wind and sunshine, a village square in a mountain hamlet—the pub and the fowls—slumbering trees—elms, poplars and hawthorn.

More mountains, an open car, a river to cross and a mountain to climb. Late afternoon—big black clouds—snowflakes falling fitfully—a flooded alpine brook at our feet and timbered hills beyond.

* * * * *

As if in defiance of the dark windy night and snow flurries outside, the bright firelight danced on the faces of the little party seated in the big fireplace drinking their after-dinner coffee. There was a wealth of romance in the night and the old, now partially dilapidated, homestead.

Arriving cold, wet and hungry (they had missed lunch in the exciting events of the day) it had seemed folly to press on and all hands welcomed the suggestion to remain the night. And rich in



BLUE GUM FOREST.
VALLEY OF THE GROSE.

—J. Wood (S.B.W.).



THE BUSHWALKER

Monaro history and alpine tradition were the tales told that night in the warmth and comradeship of the old kitchen fire. Some day an able pen will marshal this wealth into a great national saga.

A golden sunrise, blue skies, and the sparkle of King Frost's wonderful jewels—big ski boots crunching on the frozen grass and puddles—heather, snow-laden trees and a long climb until at last we stand at the gap. Ahead, tier upon tier, rises the white majesty of the Alps, while behind and below us are the rolling blue hills of the pretty Monaro. Spellbound, we stand awhile in the crisp, bracing wind, then, bending down, we kick our feet into the toe-irons, snap the heel clips and launch us off westward toward the beckoning Alps and our temporary home.

We enjoyed a very happy holiday in those Snowy Mountains. For several days we had a severe blizzard and could not go far afield, but just played around practising turns and deep snow technique on the nearby wood runs. But such blizzard days were indescribably beautiful with the thick snow falling and the trees and hut like Christmas cards come to life. For several days and nights the snow fell so thickly that each morning we had to dig our way out of the hut. On the top of the range the wind was terrific and we could not see more than fifty yards, while down in the sheltered timber there would be little more than an ordinary wind. At night the wind would howl and moan and shake our snug home, but who cared as we sang around the stove or snuggled in our warm bunks.

On the blizzardless days when the sun shone and the skies were blue, we sallied forth with lunch in our knapsacks to roam over the beautiful white mountains, to leave our ski trails down many slopes, to climb the highest ridges, and to pause wrapped in awe at the majesty and splendour of the scenes before us; to feel the keen, bracing wind in our faces, the joy of life and vigor in our veins, our freedom like the wind and all wild things. The cold mountain air rushes past us as we speed down the mountainside with the snow spray rising from our skis, the hilltops bathed in the golden flush of the sunset, the deepening blue shadows around us. With the rattle of skis on the freezing snow the last run of the day brings us to the bright warmth and comfort of the hut, hot food, the songs and yarns around the fireside and—a snug bunk.

Ah, life is very sweet!

But there comes a day when the food runs out and we sadly shoulder our rucksacks, close the door of our hut and wend our way down out of the mountains. And the soft, slow swish-swish of our skis matches the sadness in our hearts. A wistful feeling waxes and wanes as we pass well loved landmarks until at last we cross the snowline and leave the whiteness for the warmer green. Within a few minutes the metamorphosis is complete and the skier instincts give way before a flood of bushwalking enthusiasm engendered by the appealing beauty of the alpine foothills, the trees and birds and streams—all the teeming beauty of the oldest land surface in the world. Ah, for a week—a fortnight—or a month to walk and camp and swim in this fairyland! But the car is waiting and we swing our packs and skis aboard and are soon speeding across the beautiful Monaro, golden in the late winter afternoon sun.

With the evening shadows comes the township of the pine trees—the luxurious hotel—and, later, the weather-worn railway station, the lights of the train and the chatter and buzz of the passengers.

In the cold, grey light of dawn we stand again on Sydney Station—like Cinderella after the ball.

THE BUSHWALKER

A RAMBLER'S SYRIAN WANDERINGS

By Sgt. RORY LOFTS (2/13th Battalion A.I.F. and Rover Ramblers' Club).

It is now many moons since the days when I roamed the hills on the Turkish frontier or traversed those in South Syria, but those days will always be the most pleasant of the war to me.

Look at a recent map of Syria; there in the top left-hand corner you will see a small piece of country projecting into Turkey. The sea laps the foot of the mountains on the west and Turkey hems it in on north and east. Right in the north-west corner is the tiny village of Kassab. This small bit of country is almost entirely inhabited by Armenians. Not long before the war a large piece of North Syria, including this small corner, was handed over to the Turks by the French, but the Armenians brought certain pressure to bear and this bit was restored to Syria. The Armenians are not fond of the Turks as they have been persecuted for hundreds of years. Three times in living memory the people of Kassab have fled, and during the last war some 300 persons were killed in Kassab, so it is not hard to understand why they look up at the frontier post on the surrounding hills with certain misgivings.

The town clings like swallows' nests to the side of Mount Cassius, the top of which is in Turkey and some 2,000 metres high. Looking up the valley it is a beautiful sight, the great, dark mass of Cassius with its conical, snowy peak rising at the head of the valley, with drifting white clouds staying about its summit. There is Kassab with its tiny, white buildings, its churches and monastery with vivid red roofs, clinging to the hillside just below the tree line. Then, from the bottom of the valley a new road makes a yellow scar twisting and turning round the hillside up to the village, passing below a great bluff which towers above it. From the top a tiny Union Jack flutters bravely in front of a large stone building with a red roof. Near the village the road crosses several stone bridges and passes Mars Cafe, where I often supplemented army rations with a good steak and eggs with chips.

The road comes to a sudden stop at the bottom edge of the village. From there you walk. To the right there is a narrow, cobbled street running up the hill through the village; to the left a rough and muddy road runs up to the pass, beyond the grey ruins of a large church, a grim reminder to Kassab of the Turks and the last war.

Once past this corner you leave the land of motors and step back into early last century, or maybe even earlier. There you are picking your way carefully on the slippery cobbles, avoiding the gutter and its water in the centre of the road. Near the middle of the village there is a stone bridge spanning a stream; crossing this, you make your way to the shopping centre. Here you step carefully as there are round holes in the middle of the street where the rain water disappears from sight; and unless care is taken so will you.



An Arab Woman.

THE BUSHWALKER

The buildings are of rough stone stuck together with mortar. Most of the roofs are flat and made of asphalt, which is kept rolled. A stone roller is kept on the roof for the purpose and in the evening as the light fades from the hills it is a common sight to see the owner of the house strolling back and forth, smoking his pipe and discussing the latest war news and village gossip as he kicks the roller in front of him.

Wandering through the village one feels rather like the "pied piper" with every child in the place following him. Many of them ask questions in quite good English, with a French word thrown in when an English one cannot be found. If you can't understand their French they will try again in Armenian, Turkish or Arabic, all of which are necessary up there.

In the surrounding valleys there are several villages, none as large as Kassab, but otherwise similar. While I was there one small village was completely destroyed by a landslide; fortunately, no one was killed. Landslides are very common during the winter and many roads become impassable until the spring. It was due to this fact that I had the opportunity of exploring much of this country, getting to know it and its people very well.



Below the tree-line the hills are well covered with pine forest and are really very beautiful. One suddenly comes to a bend in the road where one sees the white summit of Cassius or, perhaps, a long stretch of coastline framed with pine trunks and branches, or, again, a tiny village nestling in some sleepy hollow, blue smoke rising lazily from the chimneys.

Further down the coast one leaves the Armenians behind and finds people more like the Arabs, although they are not Arabs, for they are not Moslems, but practice a sun worship and are known as Alouites. They are a pleasant, friendly people in these hills—unlike the average Arab, they do not beg and are very willing to help you without expecting reward. Their dress is similar to ordinary Arab dress—baggy trousers, sometimes very ornately braided down the

THE BUSHWALKER

side, a waist sash and a loose shirt. The women wear much more colourful clothing than Arab women; they are very fond of a lot of red and floral designs. One of the most beautiful and colourful scenes one could wish to see is a crowd of women working in the fields.

The change in clothing is most striking as you come from an Armenian to an Alouite village. The Armenians look very drab by comparison in their brown corduroy breeches, short European coat (usually of some dark colour), Turkish knee-high boots (with soles made from old motor tyres) and cloth caps. The whole effect is rather early 19th century and one could easily believe time had suddenly gone into reverse.

I remember one day collecting a billy and something to eat, then setting off for the coast about 2,000 feet below. I started by going up through the village, turning to the left and so through the pass. At the top of this pass a few ruins of an old castle remain; one can still make out the shape of the old wall, although little remains above ground.

From here the track winds downwards, twisting and turning round the steep hillsides through several sleepy villages, where one may see some village lass carrying a pitcher of water home from the village pump, or some old woman bent double under a great load of brushwood which she has gathered round the steep mountain-sides.

The hills are covered with a heath while the valleys are clothed in pines. Straight ahead there rise two grey peaks about 1,500 metres high whose feet are bathed by the sea. I was very keen to climb one of them (the other was in Turkey), but, unfortunately, never got the chance. The track winds round the slopes of the southern peak down to the sea. About half-way down one comes round a ridge and there, ahead through the pines, one can see a monastery surrounded by poplars and some large, spreading trees. It made a beautiful picture with the slope of the hills, the dark pineclad valleys, the white monastery with its red roof and trees and, beyond, the sea, with headland after headland as far as the eye could see.

Round the monastery there was an orchard and a vineyard. The crop from the latter was used yearly to replenish the monastery cellars. The priest was a cheery old chap, a French Canadian, and could hardly make himself understood in English as it had been about forty years since he had used it.

The main industry here was timber-getting and the methods were most primitive. Their axes were rather like a battle-axe and looked most awkward to use. The hauling was done by mules; a log was fastened to a pack-saddle on either side and the poor mule scrambled up and down the hills to the nearest road or beach, where the logs were stacked, later to be transported by motor truck or sailing ship to the various ports and towns of Syria and Palestine.

Another day I went inland; it was almost like some of the old haunts back home—a narrow track winding round the hills some fifty to one hundred feet above a fast-flowing stream, which could be heard bubbling in its rocky bed. The hills were covered with thick undergrowth and a fairly dense forest of pines and some trees strange to me. It was winter and the latter were bare of leaves but were still festooned with vines. It was one of the prettiest bushwalks I did there and, unfortunately, the last.

The world after all is not so unendurable, when a man gets a chance to look at it and smell it and be alone with it. This acquaintance with the world—this renewal of the happiness which you used to feel when you were young—such is the whole purpose and end of taking walks. Happy walking.

"U-BOAT" (Camp Fire Club.)

ON KINGFISHERS.

By MACHIN HALL (Warrigal Club of N.S.W.).

The kingfisher is a sacred bird in some lands. And I could easily join in a cult of worship which held this bird as its sacred symbol; for kingfishers mean magic moments for me. The kingfisher loves contrasts, and has a fine sense of the dramatic, both in his movements and in his choice of scenery. When he bursts across your horizon for a moment, he leaves an unforgettable impression in an equally unforgettable setting. Much of his time is spent in solemn vigils, poised on a bough drooping over the stream. Lucky the man who spies the bird before the swift movement which betrays him to the eye. For in a flash he is gone, before you can feast long enough on his gleaming hues. And a kingfisher at rest is almost as exciting as a kingfisher in flight.

As boys we eagerly watched, as we passed to and from school, a mound built on an old rifle range. Here, among the logs and yellow earth, kingfishers were wont to build every spring. To me it was no mere heap of dirt, but a piece of earth hallowed by this incredibly blue vision. Even now I cannot pass by that collapsed heap of clay, melting into the grass, without a thrill of expectation; but kingfishers haunt the spot no more.

Grown older, I stumbled upon the kingfisher in literature in E. V. Lucas' "Ville D'Avray." A glorious revelation it was to find that others, in other lands, found the kingfisher so "exciting." Lucas has the right emotional attitude to kingfishers. The sight of one makes a red letter day for him.

"At Ville D'Avray, as I stood between the two lakes, a kingfisher flashed by, my first for years. Only for a moment. It flashed across my vision for only a moment—burning, beautiful—and was gone; but I had seen it."

The poet, W. H. Davies, finds himself just as much in tune:—

"It was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
And left thee all her lovely hues;
And as her mother's name was Tears,
So runs it in thy blood to choose
For haunts the lonely pools, and keep
In company with trees that weep."

A hunter of mountain pools sees his kingfishers in their best setting as they shoot by, vivid as falling stars in the velvet night. Erskine Creek has many a deep dark pool, painted a dozen shades of green with reflected foliage, or blue with the mirrored sky; but none is so grandly set, among cliff, rock and tree, as the one cut off in the south meander of the stream, which is by-passed by the great saddle near the mouth. Years ago we used to reach it "over the tops" from the Nepean Gorge, descending a rift in its almost continuous cliff line. The journey up stream was much shorter, but a bush epicure loves to approach his pools from the heights above.

Duncan and I spent a night here once, sleeping without cover on a wallaby track under the overhang of the cliff wall. Fear of a wallaby landing on my chest gave me a sleepless night, and the sun was fingering down the ridges before we descended to the water in the morning. The great pool lay stretched out beneath us, calm and placid, with light vapours curling up from its breast into the chill air. On the opposite side loomed an impressive line of precipices, leaping down to the corner of the pool in giant steps. Over its jagged shoulder peered the morning sun.

Then it happened to us as it did to Lucas at Ville D'Avray. Foiled against the dark shadowed cliff opposite, an azure meteor—a miracle of burnished blue—flashed by. The kingfisher was on his

morning flight—conscious, I am sure, of its perfect setting! With eager eyes we watched him travel the mile-long reach, burning in the first gleam of the morning sun. "The sacred kingfisher," murmured Duncan. He made no dive to the water, for he was not hunting. The flight was his morning prayer. Often have I longed to visit the pool again at sunrise to see if the flight of the kingfisher is a regular morning rite. In such a place it should be.

In the gully below our old Lapstone home lies a swimming pool secluded among the trees—a place of treasured memories and undisturbed birds. Through the surrounding forest float the notes of a score of birds, each representing in turn a known form hidden among the twigs and leaves. Here the wattle blossoms ferry themselves about the surface of the water in the eddies of the breeze. Falling leaves spiral down gently to float about for days. Tiny lizards bask in the sun among the rock crevices, while at the upper end of the pool the sands are marked by the feet of a host of shy birds, who walk bravely to the water's edge to drink.

As the years passed by, our visits to the old home became fewer and were tied to certain holidays. A time-honoured rite was an early morning visit to the dam, as we continued to call the lovely reach of water, to check over the growth of all the wild plants which crept down from the hills to reclaim the devastation of the builders—and to speak to all the birds again. For you can talk to wild birds without any feeling of strangeness if you are quite alone. On one visit a new and rare privilege awaited me. A kingfisher was perched, with a kingfisher's usual solemnity and silence, on a low limb by the water. His head was turned to one side, with one bright eye intently gazing below, in an attitude which gave him a strangely waggish look—as if he knew a thing or two. He did! His eyes were fixed where

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THE BUSHWALKER

the water yellowed over a set of sandstone steps leading down beneath the surface of the water.

Here, I knew, swam to and fro shoals of tiny mosquito fish—each no more than an inch and a half in length. Presently he dived, clean and trim, with hardly a feather wetted, and arose with a minnow in his bill. Our minnows, introduced from the ponds of Emu Plains, had thriven so well that the water contained myriads of them. This loveliest of birds, since he deigned to make our pool his private fishing ground, was welcome to them all. Even if you are lucky enough in your river expeditions to see a kingfisher or two now and again, how rare it is to have one land his fish at your very feet! And here was my glorious creature picking out fish after fish with never a miss. No wonder I shrank back among the rocks and watched him at work with pride and reverence. It was like standing spell-stopped after bursting into sacred ground.

At last he rose and flew away through the trees to a high perch some hundred and twenty feet up a great tree—the only giant tree thereabouts. As children we loved the old iron-bark so well that we gave it a name and wove many a day dream around its lofty branches. We called it "The Humpy." The great knotty whorls, which lined it for a hundred feet, rather awed the timber getters, who concluded that it would not split. Often they tried to calculate the number of sleepers to be cut from its timbers, but its gnarled appearance spared it from the axe. A squeaking of young birds came from aloft. And then the truth dawned on me! Something was happening which had never happened before in the life of a tree which was old when Captain Cook came. The old tree, fresh and green even within our memories, was showing signs of age and decay—and my kingfishers were nesting in one of its hollow spouts!

A few mornings later I missed them from the pool and made a new discovery. My birds lived not only on fish, but on many beetles and other insects which they caught awing, soaring among the trees. For many an hour, lying face up, I watched them, with their feathers filtering the sunlight, carrying insects aloft to the nesting hollow. While the weather was bright and the air ahum with insect life, they sailed among the trees. On dull days they returned to decorate the dark pool, busily but solemnly fishing.

As the kingfisher's somewhat unmusical note was borne in upon me, sound images of other days came back to me. On the tops of many a stretch of the lower Blue Mountains it is often heard, far from any considerable water. In heavily timbered country the bird is less often seen, for there are fewer open vistas to reveal the brilliant flash of his passage.

Another thrill awaited me. One morning, in the heart of an inland town, the now familiar note came in at the window. The kingfishers had arrived! Day after day they graced the creek behind the house, plying up and down a reedy reach, and built a nest in the high bank. The next spring the pair returned again, but where they spent the winter I know not. Stevenson has remarked that a man's patriotic emotions are associated with the streams of his youth. Comprehendingly said, but why not add to this yearning heart tug—the birds of his youth? Nothing flutters the heart of the exile more than the familiar note of a bird.

... Morong Deep! How little words can convey. I had heard walkers talk of Morong Deep in hushed tones. I even knew that four miles was good going for a day's walk, but Morong Deep has to be seen to be believed. It's rough. It's tough. But it's great stuff. You feel that here is a man's job to battle through. Cliffs to scale, ledges to negotiate, steep mountain sides, thickets to break through. . . .

THE BUSHWALKER

MOUNTAIN MEMORIES.

By DOT ENGLISH (The Sydney Bush Walkers and N.Z. Alpine Club).

Uncomfortably dressed up with everything just so, including tight new shoes, listening apathetically to the conversation as it passed from the impossibility of running the house without domestic help to the difficulty of purchasing bottled beer and cigarettes, I felt a sudden piercing jab like a needle through the ball of my big toe and jumped violently to life. As some sort of explanation seemed to be expected, I said "Frostbite," and lapsed into silence again, but, recalling the capital-letter climb on which I sustained a slightly frostbitten big toe which still occasionally deals me a sharp nerve jab, I felt a deep nostalgia begin to creep over me for the wild, carefree mountaineering life—sweating up the glacier under a 50-lb. pack; toiling up densely forested mountain slopes with mud on our pants and water squelching through our boots, faces scorched by sun and wind; rained on, hailed on, snowed on, whipped by blizzards on the heights; glissading down thousands of feet of snow slope to some rough alpine hut nestling snugly on the mountainside, or perched precariously on a rocky outcrop in a world of white snow-fields, or dropped down among huge tumbled boulders on a moraine, shaken by a continual thunder of avalanches hurtling from the surrounding peaks. How far back in the misty past it all seemed now! . . .

We had already had a fortnight of magnificent weather in the highest part of the New Zealand Alps, and now, with only three days' holiday remaining, we conceived the bright idea of climbing Mt. Cook (12,000 odd ft.), via the southern peak, which is mainly a rock face and hence very enticing to one fed from infancy on Australian rock. The only question was, would the weather gods smile on us for a further couple of days? Ominous signs were already creeping up the Hooker Valley the day we left for the Gardiner Hut, situated at a height of 5,000 ft. on the lower western slope of Cook, in a most exciting location on a huge mound of rock called "Pudding Rock." To get to it you climb almost vertically with the aid of a wire rope while the wind tears round your trouser legs and a waterfall splashes on your head from above. Merely to get as far as Gardiner Hut, let alone Cook, calls for a spot of prime mountaineering technique.

We ensconced ourselves in the hut, what time the weather worsened—a roaring blizzard that shook the hut to its foundations and threatened to lift it skywards, hail that dashed on the iron roof and walls like a spatter of bullets, and snow that swept horizontally down the Hooker Valley in mighty swirls. "This kills our chance on Cook to-morrow," said we as we concocted the large and customary bully-beef stew and settled into our bunks for an afternoon's riotous reading of the hut literature, chiefly Wild West and mystery yarns. We went to sleep early with a watch on the table and a torch close by so we could refer to it at intervals throughout the night, having no alarm watch, and hoped that the storm would abate before mid-



night which, sure enough, it did. At 2.30 we arose on a beautiful, calm, starry night, heated up our rice and apricots, had breakfast while we pushed our feet into our boots, and before 4 a.m. we were away.

The previous week Birtle had climbed Cook from the Tasman side. On the descent his companion had had the misfortune to drop his ice axe, which caused them to spend the night out on the summit rocks and made the subsequent descent very nerve-racking. With this salutary lesson in mind I put a double thong on my ice axe before setting out. "No chance of my repeating old Bob's bad luck," thought I, but just to be doubly sure I included in my pack as a second line of defence a large pig-stabber knife. Several hours up steep, deeply crevassed snowfields brought us to the rock face of which the South Peak of Cook is mainly composed, and from then on there were hours and hours and still more hours of upward progression, clearing the plastered snow and chipping ice off every single foothold and handhold as we went.

About three-quarters of the way up, while endeavouring to get a better grip on the rope, I relinquished my hold on the ice axe, relying on the double thong round my wrist to hold it dangling till I should need it, but the treacherous thing contrived to fall head first, and—neatly slipping its moorings—sailed away into bottomless space. After a few minutes' lurid language, "Well, let the damn thing go!" said I, "I do better without it dangling in my way," and from then on I relied on the pig-stabber knife which, although it bent like putty and cut through the snow like a warm knife through butter, proved effective enough and had this added advantage that it could be held between my teeth when I needed both hands for climbing.

Continual step-cutting had jarred our only watch into silence, so we guessed the time by the sun. Some time after it had passed from the mid-sky we reached the summit ice-cap. The first couple of curves of ice were negotiated all right in crampons. The final slope of a few hundred feet to the actual summit didn't seem worth the risk with only one ice axe, but as it was equivalent, say, to climbing Mt. Cloudmaker, but omitting to surmount the cairn on top, we considered we had done what we set out to do and were content to leave it at that.

The view from that height was magnificent, embracing all the west coast bush country to the sea stretching very blue and soft to the far horizon, while to north and south and east lay range after range of snowy peaks and glaciers and misty valleys. We took some photos but didn't linger too long as the atmosphere at 12,000 ft. is somewhat chilly.

We set off on the descent, quite confident of being off the rock face by dark, and so down the snow slopes and glacier by moonlight, arriving at the hut certainly no later than 10 p.m. So much for our hopes! We were still toiling slowly down the rock when the sun broke in on our concentration with, "Well, good-night, folks."

"Eh, wait on!" cried we in some alarm, clinging on the rock face by one clinker and a couple of fingernails.

"Sorry," says the Sun, "whistle's gone; we don't get paid for



overtime," and with that he winked his eye and dropped down behind the mountain top.

"So ho," thought I, "another night out like the one we spent on Malte Brun at Easter," and, hastily taking a few bearings in the last remaining gleams of twilight, we continued our downward climb. Hours slipped by as swiftly and noiselessly as a stream on the glacier ice, and now the moon was with us, suffusing the rocks with its full white light.

At length we reached a ledge a few degrees nearer the horizontal than the vertical, and here we huddled close under a projecting rock in a vain endeavour to escape the wind while we held on and ate a handful of sultanas and some cheese.

"How-are-y'r-feelin', son?" I asked, articulating with difficulty as my face and lips were frozen stiff as a board.

"Pretty grisly," says Birtle, still not without his infectious grin. "And you?"

"Cold as blazes," I replied. "Let's get going before we freeze to death"—which we thereupon did with as much speed as our stiffening frames would allow.

There was a bit of delay while we deliberated which of two rather similar glaciers was our one, and—thanks to our guardian angels exerting a little more than their customary solicitude on our behalf—we managed to choose the right one. An hour or so of cramponing down remarkably steep snow slopes, my hand on Birtle's shoulder in lieu of my lost ice axe, brought us to the badly crevassed area, and right in the thick of a maze of deep cracks the moon, with even less warning than the sun had given us, whispered, "Time's up," and softly withdrew.

"O well," we thought, "we got on all right without the sun, now we'll get on all right without the moon"—and that was just how it was.

Dream-walking down the final slopes of the glacier, yawning like a tornado every twenty paces . . . a sleepy voice enquires, "Do you see what I see?"

"It's the dawn?" Yes, it's the dawn right enough.

"I don't think that's funny," said an aggrieved voice addressing the sun, still bearing a grudge against him for the practical joke played on us yester eve. This sunlight-moonlight-no light-sunlight sequence played strange tricks with one's sanity. "Life is a chequer-board of nights and days . . . of nights and days . . . of nights and days . . ."

"Are those rocks our rocks?" asked Birtle, in that strange possessive attitude one tends to adopt in the mountains towards any familiar bit of scenery. With difficulty I forced my heavy eyes open another fraction of an inch and surveyed the dim, rugged outline of rock outcrop.

"They'll do," I murmured, "one heap of rocks is as good as another I suppose."

"It's not the rocks we want," Birtle reminded me gently. "It's the hut wot stands thereon."

"Eh?" I said . . . but I was asleep again; meanwhile my legs carried on mechanically towards the rock as steel is attracted to a magnet, or—a better simile as regards speed—as a slug is attracted to a lettuce.



THE BUSHWALKER

We kicked our crampons off and plodded slowly up the rocks till we reached the top—barren of any sign of habitation, alas.

"Birtle," I cried, "the hut's gone!" But he, knowing that huts don't "go" as easily as that, had another glimmer of an idea.

"We're on the wrong rocks," he said; and there, sure enough, half a mile further down the glacier, was another identical heap of rock, and in the pink dawn we could vaguely make out the tin roof of the little Gardiner Hut. So we climbed down off our lookout and plodded off on the last lap.

And now we really were on our own rocks—and now we were inside the little grey hut. The kettle stood on the stove waiting, and Birtle put a light under it while I sank on to a bunk and made heavy work of pulling off my boots and socks. Then, as I swayed and rolled into my sleeping bag, there was a voice asking, "Will you have a cup of tea, Dot?"

A drowsy response that trailed away to a sleepy whisper, "Tea is a drug . . . bad for you . . . tans your inside . . . shatters your nerves . . ."

And then deep oblivion for six hours.

For some years bushwalkers have talked of "primitive areas." No one else seems to have understood that they meant areas left absolutely untouched by man. Now this term has been narrowed to mean those areas from which all human beings may be excluded if it is found necessary to do so for the preservation of the native plants and animals. A new term, "unimproved roadless area," has been used to describe places in which humans would have preference. To cover both kinds of lands left in their natural state bushwalkers have now adopted the term "Wilderness."

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THE BUSHWALKER

RECONSTRUCTION AND PLANNING.

SOME ASPECTS OF CONSERVATION IN ENGLAND AND AUSTRALIA.

By R. ELSE MITCHELL (Warrigal Club of N.S.W.).

The Commonwealth is destined to play a greater part in all matters relating both to the life and the activities of its citizens than it did before the war. The Convention on Post War Powers, and the acceptance by the States, qualified though it was, of the formula contained in the Commonwealth Powers Bill, showed the trend of events. That Bill does not deal with planning as such, but it does embrace a number of subjects involved in reconstruction, and a Ministry of Post War Reconstruction has been set up to co-ordinate the activities of the States, and to help guide them in their task.

We are far behind England in these respects, which is more than ever regrettable because of the constitutional difficulties facing us which have no counterpart in England: we have seven governments against one for the whole of Great Britain. Our need for planning is all the greater on that account. The English Ministry of Works and Planning appointed two committees as early as 1941 to consider matters of post-war reconstruction. Land is the basis of life. The proper use of land in Britain was dealt with in the Scott Report on Land Utilization in Rural Areas (Cmd. 6378) which was published in August, 1942, and which contains much that is vital to conservator and economist alike.

In this report, the orderly development of rural areas is envisaged, and a National Planning Authority is proposed which would control developmental work, and would be in a position to enforce its authority on the private citizen. Britain may be the home of conservatism but this extension of public authority is much more advanced than anything we have committed ourselves to in Australia. It is no less needed in this country.

Foremost amongst its plans the English Committee sets those concerning the provision of playing fields, national and regional parks, nature reservations, holiday camps, forestry development, "hikers' highways," footpaths, bridle paths, and youth hostels. The control of such activities would come under a National Parks Authority and it would not be split up amongst a number of local government bodies or trusts the like of which have failed so signally in Australia because of lack of money, purpose, and vision in administration. Amongst the projects of the English report is a committee to set out and look after all kinds of non-vehicular paths including the old "coastguards' path" which would be a right of way for walkers around the whole coastline of England and Wales. What delights a similar path around Sydney Harbour and Broken Bay would present!

All these measures are intended for the benefit of the whole nation, their object being "the proper and profitable use of the land measured not merely in terms of the individual man's immediate need but rather in terms of man's collective need, both present and future." A complementary report is that of the Uthwatt Committee on Compensation and Betterment (Cmd. 6386) which deals with the subject of compensation and betterment in respect of public control of the use of land, and which also deals with immediate steps to be taken in order to make post-war work effective. The pegging of land values at the level of those prevailing on 31st March, 1939 is recommended for the purpose of public acquisition or resumption. Its major theses, like those of the Scott Committee, embrace the idea of a Central Planning Authority to control building and all develop-

THE BUSHWALKER

ment throughout the country in the interest of the nation as a whole.

In these reports we have great emphasis on the balanced use of land, setting aside the most suitable areas for special purposes, such as agriculture, recreation, defence, transport, and building, quite apart from the present value attached to any given tract of land. This is a new social organization which, if carried out, will change the whole face of England in the interests of the great mass of the people, who are now squeezed into relatively small areas outside the domains of the larger landowners. It will create a new scope of activities, new opportunities for enjoyment of the outdoors and, it is hoped, a mitigation of the worst features of urban civilization.

What bearing has all this on Australian problems? We have large areas of unalienated and unoccupied land which, from our viewpoint as lovers of the outdoors, are available for use of the nation as a whole. Yet this space is an illusion rather than a reality. Half the population of this State is in the metropolitan areas and half the remainder is in the larger country towns. How can the ordinary citizen get out into the country? Ribbon development along the main roads shuts him off from the country behind them, whilst existing roads and railway stations pin him down to quite limited areas. The "landlocked" country town is only too well known by those who have tried to get out of it into ranges and wild country which, if near in miles, are still separated from him by spaces of sacred private land, guarded against his trespass by all the terrors of the law.

Access rather than space is the greatest problem in planning for recreation in Australia. This reverses the English position, where small areas must be striven against but where private owners, in general, respect the ancient rights of way across the fields, and usually

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THE BUSHWALKER

do not deny reasonable access to beauty spots such as river banks, woods and small ravines; this gives a sound existing basis for planning. It will be a sheer waste of time in Australia to set great areas aside for national parks whilst the common citizen or even the wealthier motorist cannot get away from Sydney, Newcastle, Canberra, Yass, Tamworth or a hundred other towns for outdoor recreation. A real plan will provide well-selected areas for the benefit of each town or group of towns and will make it possible for the people as a whole to enjoy the benefits provided for them.

Most of our own would-be planners have not seized this elementary fact. There is infinitely more in planning than drawing lines around land shown on county maps as unalienated, and, if the English reports do nothing more for us than to show how this complex matter may be tackled and to get us to think clear of the present web of hazy nothings which makes us think ourselves conservators at present, they will have helped us infinitely.

"BUT FIRST THE ALP . . ."

By GEORGE W. KENYON (C.M.W.).

... "But first the Alp—
Where the high ranges joining at their height
enclose a pasture kneeling at their feet.
We lived, and breathed a purer air than men
confined to plains, and trod a richer grass."

According to Irving, an Alp is a "high pasture, generally above the tree line, to which cows, cowherds and cheesemakers go up to stay in the summer months." Substitute the word "shepherds" for "cheesemakers," (for the industry which these folks represent is associated with the Alps in one particular country only), and we observe how completely our own Alps fulfil this definition. But beyond this brief statement of the use of the uplands is a feeling that their appeal to humans lies deeper than in fulfilling a material purpose, for there is a bond between men and mountains based on pure enjoyment of their magnificence. Man appears to have more respect for a realm of nature which has such vigorous seasonal weather that his opportunity for using it is limited. He is invited to use the verdant pastures, flourishing under a sunny sky. But with the first flutter of autumn snow, the season of yielding a livelihood for man and beast comes to an end, and the sheep and cattle are driven to the safety of the plains, from which man can look back at the white ridges and marvel at their beauty.

We have become accustomed to associating towering peaks with smooth and rounded alps. This is more a result of our awareness of such a combination in the mountain fields of Europe, rather than in a solid belief that the two are inseparable. There is no Schreckhorn or Mont Blanc in our country, but does our mountain scenery suffer on that account? Certainly it does if it is the function of nature to provide always the spectacular, but on the other hand there is considerable value in lower altitudes if one's mind is searching for beauty rather than for vertical measurements. Our Australian Alps possess beauty in a more subtle form. It does not thrust itself on you. You have to search for it. Climb to a ridge by the Gungahlin and you will see an almost unimaginable aspect of Jagungal, its unbroken whiteness clearly defined against the delicate blue of the lower sky. To see Cabramurra, the table-topped hill, to its best advan-

THE BUSHWALKER

tage, one should be on the Munyang Range. But these hills have no fame by reason of altitude, only from their quality. And to a degree, there has been an advantage from this in that our hills are not infested with pseudo mountain-lovers, such as those who have regarded the pinnacles of Europe as names for their catalogues of mountain conquests. It cannot furthermore be argued that owing to our easy mountain slopes, there is no element of danger necessary to earn the respect and awe of man for the power of nature, for there are other forces which can provide all the struggle necessary. Pit oneself against a blizzard, or spend a winter night on the range in wild weather and the full sting and strength of nature will be felt. We need only true lovers of high places to make the pilgrimage to the Alps. There are fewer visitors to our Alps than to others, but probably there are as many pilgrims.

To experience the full beauty and charm of the Alps there are only two ways to travel—on horse and on foot, either walking or skiing. The first is confined to summer only, whereas the other has the advantage of use all the year round.

Skiing for itself alone cannot be associated with mountain worship, and must be ranked as an athletic sport. But as a medium for carrying one through the land for the purpose of experiencing its magnificence, skiing is an incomparable experience. There is magic in swinging through the forests: there is exaltation in climbing high ridges and running down to the next valley. But in the eternal glory of our surroundings we overlook the runners on our feet and gaze with "vague emotion" over the rolling hills and twisting streams: at the bare windward slopes of the ridges in the golden hue of the evening. On the hard snow in the Alpine night one can walk and experience silence that can exist only in high country, and succumb to the spell of the star-dusted sky whose light is reflected in the dim white of the smooth snow ridges.

There is fascination in the Alps, which lies beyond the mere interest in the detail of nature. The mountain ash forests on the Thredbo ridges are beautiful: the platypus in Gungahlin are interesting, but above these is the all pervading spirit of the highlands, a force which produces an emotional response to this broad field of nature; a field where the whole keynote is vigour in living. The snow gums and muzzelwoods possess with their grace and colour, a wiry strength to withstand the cloaking snow and fierce winds. In the Alps we experience the hottest sun, the most intense cold. The grass is greener than in the low country. The intense fondness and respect of developing man for the high Alps will be more than an interested inspection of the wonders of nature through a magnifying glass, for it embodies a broader revelation of mental association above that which the material world has to offer, and is the direct antithesis to the superficialities of the uninspired life into which he has drifted.

"Such fire was theirs; O not for fame alone—
That coarser thread in all the finger skein
That draws adventure, oft by vulgar minds
Deemed man's sole aim—but for the high delight
To tread untrodden solitudes, and feel
A sense of power, of fullest freedom, lost
In the loud vale where MAN is all in all."

We search for worthwhile experiences. In other spheres such as music, we are listening beyond the succession of notes for the undertone of emotion. Our present material age will not be everlasting. Man will become weary of sensate living and will awaken to the need for adjusting his mind to the higher level, in which a proper understanding and love for the hills of nature will figure as one of his achievements.



SPOTTED GUM.

—T. Coffey (S.B.W.).



MORNING.

—W. Mulligan (R.R.C.).

"WHERE THERE'S SMOKE . . .?"

—W. Watson (R.R.C.).



THE BUSHWALKER

"ROOKY DAYS."

By "ROOKY" (S.B.W.).

Although it is now a year since I graduated from the "Rooky" stage I remember every moment of that horrible time as though it were yesterday. Every incident is indelibly printed on my tired brain and sometimes I wonder if it was all just a terrible nightmare.

One day I took a notion and tottered down to the recruiting doings with the intention of joining the army in that anti-aircraft business. I was confronted by a female, moustachioed and massive, clad in khaki. She put me through my paces, firing questions at me with all the speed of one of her anti-aircraft guns. I was so terrified that I might have to work under someone like her that I waited until she took her eyes off me for a moment and then nipped out the door. She spotted me and with honeyed words tried to lure me back, but I slithered through her fingers and at the other end of the corridor I hit straight into a band of prospective recruits for the W.A.A.A.F. I found myself listening to a persuasive voice saying that girls of my outstanding ability, intelligence and integrity were wanted for a most secret work. The integrity bit took me in; I wasn't quite sure what the word meant but knew I had it and in any case I could look it up (just to make sure) when I got home. It all sounded so terribly secret and important, and before I knew it I had filled in several application forms and signed several times on dotted lines. Anyway I knew I'd look much better in Air Force blue than in khaki!

About a month later I was called up for medical and various adaptability and intelligence tests. Never will I forget that day. It was bitterly cold; the building was a concrete garage; there were about 300 bewildered maidens standing about with little suitcases, waiting to be told what to do and where to do it. I groped my way through five written adaptability tests, then—armed with my integrity and my outstanding intelligence—I alone was put through several more. All the time most terribly important-looking people dashed about clutching most official documents. Everyone seemed sure of themselves and everyone knew where he (and/or she, as the case may be) was going, that is, everyone except we 300 aforementioned maidens. I spent the afternoon shivering in my panties and slippers saying "AH" and "99" and, at prescribed intervals, was told by an important personage wearing two stripes on his sleeve that I was waiting on the wrong wooden form and to go and wait on the wooden form at the other end of the cold, draughty passage. At 5.30 I was informed I was a physical wreck, but that they would see if I would pull through in time to resist the King's enemies and keep the King's peace.

Another month went drearily by. I dashed about making a will—not that I had anything to leave, but it all sounded so serious and important. I put all my clothes in moth balls and "Wound up my Estate." Then came the Great Day. They sent me a list of things to take, and I found afterwards that the toothbrush was about the only thing left off the list, which would have been ample for a month's holiday. I reported and, with 250 other fillies, was shunted into buses and transported to the camp for our "Rooky" training. Hags who had entered the camp only the week before jeered, "You'll be sorry," and I was beginning to believe that I would; in fact, I was sure right then that it was the worst day's work I had ever done.

We were formed into queues and marched literally miles to get a knife, then more miles to get a fork and spoon, then back to the knife department to get a couple of dirty big enamel plates and an outsize mug; then back to a dreary-looking mess eaten in a drearier-looking place called "The Mess." I began to understand why!

THE BUSHWALKER

After lunch we were hounded into huts—long wooden affairs divided into rooms for two—and then marched off for inoculations. Again we stood in queues and bared our arms for the needles. A few girls, tired out with struggling with luggage and corporals and queues, got the jitters, and one was hysterical. Now more than ever I realised the truth of "You'll be sorry," and my brain worked overtime thinking out ways and means of a discharge. There was more marching about to get blankets, another dreary meal and a lecture on what to expect. Ye gods! nothing could be worse than what I had already experienced. I kept saying, "I must be brave. Remember Grace Darling and Florence Nightingale and Eleanor Roosevelt and the Empire Builders."

To my horror I was put in charge of the hut housing thirty hags, and told that it would be my duty to get them up, bathed, clothed and in their right minds out on the parade ground at 6.30 a.m. What a thing to foist on a girl who believed that dawn was something only poets and drunks knew about! We fell into our beds worn out. I lay awake all night afraid that I wouldn't wake up in time to turn out the troops. My room-mate lay awake all night crying from sheer homesickness. Everyone in the bally hut lay awake all night tossing and turning for various reasons. One lass with a consumptive cough eased her sufferings at regular intervals. I wished she might die, myself likewise.

Dawn did eventually appear, but not as Mr. Kipling says—"like thunder on the road to Mandalay." We ate a most repulsive breakfast and then spent an hour polishing taps. Then we were marched off to get our overalls and other Articles Airwomen for the use of. This made us feel a little better as we were so conspicuous in our civvies. The overalls were immediately labelled P.K.'s (passion killers). The underwear was something to be shuddered over and hidden out of sight.

Then followed three weeks of horror; marching up and down the parade ground for hours on end: "Left, right, left, right, left, right, left: swing those arms: hold your head up: there is no money left lying around on this parade ground." We had lectures on this and lectures on that. We were taught how to salute and "advance in column of route." I can't imagine why, but we were taught it just the same. I very soon found out that corporals were chosen for their lack of sense and I soon learned to vanish into thin air when anything with a couple of stripes appeared. I guarded my little flock of thirty vultures like an old campaigner and soon knew how to bluff them. I found also I could spend easily half-an-hour putting brasso on a tap and another half-hour rubbing it off. It's really a cinch when you get the game sewn up.

At last came the day of the pass-out parade. Gorgeously attired in our ill-fitting uniforms we marched madly up and down, saluting and advancing in column of route, and swinging the arms shoulder high in the prescribed fashion. It was all rather dreary and no one was at all interested; it was just an old custom and something to be endured.

We had to take the bally drill corporal out to dinner (just as a mark of our appreciation), but personally I hoped she'd fall flat on her face the day before and not be able to go. Unfortunately, she didn't, and we—all thirty of us—had a dinner and giggled suitably. We were then fully-fledged W.A.A.A.F., and then I had to sit there at the camp for six solid weeks, dodging work until my posting came through. It was quite pleasant when I worked out a system and had no worries about being found any place.

Thus ended my "Rooky" days. I've since heard patriotic women say that their "Rooky" days were the happiest of their W.A.A.A.F. life: ye gods, mine were the dreariest and most miserable of my

THE BUSHWALKER

whole career as W.A.A.A.F. or civilian, and I can honestly say I couldn't go through it again. I was the most harassed and badgered woman in the kingdom. Since then, of course, I have learned the answers—or most of them—and now that I've got the game sewn completely up it's a grand life. If any of you want to join the W.A.A.A.F. just make an appointment with me.

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A new way of raising the money needed by the Bushwalkers' Services Committee was discovered this year by members of the Rucksack Club (Sydney, N.S.W.). Week-end after week-end they have gone pea-picking—or fruit-picking—and have handed over their earnings. A small committee has now been formed to make a roster of members from all clubs who will go picking once a month so that all can enjoy some bushwalking. To the small farmer without accommodation for extra workers, a week-end visit from twelve or twenty bushwalkers with their own camping gear often means the saving of his crop. Thank for the lead, Rucksackers!

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ON GETTING LOST.

By TOD SLOANE (Bucksack Club, Sydney, N.S.W.).

By popular tradition lost people are supposed to panic and rush blindly on and on, tearing themselves and their clothes to shreds. We are brought up on this tradition and it is natural for us to react to it upon realising that we are lost, in spite of the counter-training that we have in our Bush Lore; but this Bush Lore has minimised the effect of the panic instinct so that it does not influence us for long. What is this Bush Lore and how do we put it to work? First I will tell you how to get lost so that you can work out your own salvage.

The easiest way to get lost is to get out into difficult country, say the Blue Labyrinth, without a map or a compass, and also pick a cloudy day when you will lose the position of the sun in the sky. You will get lost very easily this way. Or go out with a map and not be able to read it—make long walks in rough country and do not allow enough time to complete the journey in daylight—get caught by mountain mists—get betrayed by country that you thought you knew. This last way is seldom your own fault. The place you knew so well suddenly becomes some other place entirely, which you have never seen before. Your bush has let you down. I will tell you an instance of this sort of thing which also brings in the mountain mist method of getting lost.

When Dave Mathews and I ascended to the edge of the Moroka Plateau in Victoria ahead of the rest of the party, Dave took me on across the High Plains without waiting for the others. He was sure that he knew the way and, as he was senior to me in experience, I thought that I had better go with him. There was no visible track in that snow-grass country; Dave and I just went across it to find the creek which flowed down past the camp. He duly found this creek and said he knew it well and that we were just above the camp; but we came to a rocky obstruction in its bed which puzzled Dave and he had to admit that he had never seen that before, and, later on, he admitted that he had never even seen the creek before. His friendly country suddenly turned into a sinister wilderness and we were lost in it.

Our circumstances were distinctly bad. On the last steep bit of the four thousand foot escarpment we had allowed some obliging horsemen to relieve us of our packs and so we had no gear but only the light clothing required for strenuous ascents, and it was freezingly cold, and the time of day was sunset. But do not blame Dave. This tale also illustrates the mountain mist way of getting lost. We had met one of these in our first two miles across the snow-grass and in it we must have made some turn, off our general direction, and not noticed it.

Before I tell of how our Bush Lore salvaged us, I will introduce another popular method of getting lost, and give an example of it. It is to fail to keep in touch with your party in difficult country, or for the leader of the party to fail to keep his party intact. When you are in trackless bush in undergrowth which tops men's heads, or in mists, keeping a party intact is a very difficult matter, especially with walkers who have ideas of their own as to selecting more negotiable terrain. Slight deviations may become deviations of disastrous dimensions. I got at fault in this way on the steep descent from the Clear Hills to the King River. I got myself separated from the party by a rocky outcrop, which developed straight sides, and I could not recross it. Taking the path of least resistance, I kept on going down. I had been in those parts two years before and the leader knew this and did not worry over me, but neither he nor I allowed

for how much one can forget in two years. I could not recognise the river when I got to it and did not know whether I had to go up it or down it to find the camp, which was very awkward. That old, instinctive fear of being lost in the bush attacked me on this occasion. It was just one moment of sheer terror. I felt so terribly alone.

Now that I have explained how to get lost, I will tell of how we salvage ourselves by means of our Bush Lore. There is a "Walkers' Guide" published in Victoria which advises a walker, on realising that he is lost, to sit down and smoke a pipe and carefully consider the situation. Note the Victorian tradition that walkers are supposed to be only men, or do the ladies down there smoke pipes? Anyhow, this is the right advice. When you are alone, sit down and think it out. When with a party, hold a conference. Thus, when on the Howitt High Plains, Fred Davies and his party were brought into camp late on a foggy night by a stockman, Fred was accused of getting lost. He retorted that they were never lost; all changes of direction that they made were decided upon by a series of conferences. The possibilities for Fred and his party were as bad as those of Dave Mathews and me in the Moroka country, but they kept their heads and used their Bush Lore. Neither did Dave and I panic. We took careful stock of all we may have done wrong in the fog, and also assessed our present position, as near as we were able to, from the features of the country that we could still see. We did more than this. We anticipated that we would be searched for—Dave was the expedition's botanist and therefore his life was valuable. It appeared to us that the most natural place for a search party to begin operations would be along the base of the big mountain which rises out

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THE BUSHWALKER

of that plateau--Castle Hill. We could still see its crags looming against the afterglow of the sunset, so we went steadfastly westwards through the gathering darkness, over everything, until we heard the coo-ees of the searchers.

Here is another instance of the use of Bush Lore. When Old Bill Johnstone tried to get off Mt. Cobbler by the wrong spur he did not, when he discovered his error, try to gain the correct one by crossing the abysmal gully between them. He knew that the only thing to do was to go back to the peak and make another start, but there would not be time to do it that day, so Old Bill lit a big fire and was going to sit by it till next morning. However, the search party, which our leader organised, soon got their eyes on Bill's fire when darkness fell.

And what did I do, that fine summer morning on the Upper King River? I quickly fought down the instinctive fear of being lost and made systematic casts up the valley slopes which I had just come down. Soon I picked up the shod hoof prints of several riders who had been with the walking party, and so solved the problem of whether the camp was up or down the river. Note I say that the horse tracks were shod ones. If they were unshod they would have been made by wild horses and have been useless as guides. This is a part of Bush Lore that is very important in the Victorian mountains.

If the people mentioned in these tales had given way to panic upon realising that they were lost, the dingoes might now be playing with their bones. You may get lost, but if you use your Bush Lore you can nearly always extricate yourself, and Bush Lore is mainly Common Sense.

INFINITY OF BLUE.

By 97658 (S.B.W.).

On a bend of silent water seen
Reflected with the tender willows green,
The skies which bridge me here
Are fathomless and clear,
Never the powder blue above my home:
Alien skies and strange:
Fleckless, they swiftly change,
Their breadth and distance tossed with sudden foam.
Crystalline is the sky I see
As lapis lazuli.

Deepens the tint as night comes on apace.
The stars are lost in windy space;
'Til in the hollow haunted midnight hour,
When all is still, within the courthouse tower
Rolls out a measured and resounding cry—
Timekeeper booming to the timeless sky.

THE BUSHWALKER

SCOTTISH INTERLUDE.

Flying-Officer J. W. EDWARDS (Y.M.C.A. Ramblers' Club).

Keswick, Windermere, Derwentwater . . . the glorious Lake District of Old England! Thatched roofs, trim neat hedges, leafy sun-speckled lanes, newly-born lambs in the fields, apple trees budding into new life . . . everywhere, the delicious freshness of the land awakening to the glorious spring! "Scotland in miniature" was how this area was described to me, and a delightful week spent exploring its beauty left me with an eager anticipation of the Highlands of Scotland.

My chance soon came. Bidding a thankful farewell to the endless Anti-Sub. patrols over grey storm-tossed Atlantic seas I set out for the lovely Colquhoun Arms Hotel at Luss, on Loch Lomond. One day was spent in tramping over the hills, intoxicated with the clear, cool air and the rich, warm scent of the heather. On another I rowed out on the Loch and, tiring of my unsuccessful attempts to lure the elusive trout, I lay back in the boat and let the wind and waves take me where they willed. Gazing up at the mighty hills around the Loch, old Ben Lomond intrigued me mightily . . . but stared back coldly in challenge at the thought taking form in my mind.

Yet another day I cycled along the road that skirts the entire length of the Loch. Lying back contentedly amongst the bracken fern and turning the pages of a much-thumbed edition of Scott the landlord had given me, the history and traditions of the Loch suddenly became very real. These fierce and proud Scottish clansmen and their bloody battles became a realism. The cavalcade of an ancient and venerable people marched before my eyes. This was the Rob Roy country and a few miles across the Loch lay The Trossachs. All around me was a land filled with hundreds of years of wonderful tradition. And while I gazed, and dreamed of days that are past, venerable old Ben Lomond still stared . . . and challenged. I resolved to take the challenge, determined to discover the beauty he guarded. It would mean a long and hard day's work from Luss but I knew my visit would be sadly incomplete unless I climbed Old Ben.

The Loch (I once called it "Lake," to the unconcealed disgust of a local) was in a capricious mood as I rowed the three miles against a strong headwind. The summit of the mountain was veiled in mist, as yet, and a light rain was falling. Dragging the boat ashore on a secluded beach I set out through a thick wood of firs. This gave way to open meadows, fringed again by thick woods. Already the skies were clearing and the countryside warming to brilliant sunshine. With Spring giving way to Summer the trees were now at their best. Giant old elms sought to hide their gnarled limbs under a canopy of translucent greenery. Here and there the sombre tones of the firs contrasted vividly against the colouring of larch and oak. From the gaunt and lifeless mien of Winter the land had changed to a riot of colour and tender foliage. Underfoot lay a carpet of glorious wild hyacinths. By runnels and streams primroses, daffodils, buttercups and wild violets grew in prolific abandon. The whole countryside had run riot in a breath-taking spectacle of exuberant new life. Such is Spring in Britain!

By now the land was rising sharply and I found myself following a well defined track. The trees gave way to heather and below me a vivid panorama of Loch and the hills was beginning to unfold. Climbing still higher I began to pass large cairns of stones every few hundred yards, and subsequently learned they were guide-marks to help people down safely in the event of one of those numerous thick mists descending swiftly on the unsuspecting climbers. A flock

THE BUSHWALKER

of sheep raised their heads inquisitively at my approach but, unimpressed, they returned quickly to their grazing. Further on a startled ptarmigan rose on beating wing . . . only to flop back suddenly again into the heather a hundred yards away. I noticed how well its grey-brow plumage blended with the heather and remembered its power to change to white to blend with the winter snows.

Old Ben's summit lay but a short way above me now. Skirting a rather treacherous bog I zigzagged up a final rocky face to the last grassy slope. Next minute I was on top of the world. The keen air was exhilarating and the beauty outspread beneath me needed time to assimilate.

How could mere words describe the wonderful surge of elation that overwhelmed me on gazing on that scene below? To the south, some twenty miles away, the river Clyde wended its way slowly down to the sea, its course marked by a long row of glittering silvery spots that were barrage balloons. Beneath those silver spots the war was being won in hundreds of shipyards where the sorely needed ships were being turned out for the battle of the Atlantic. Close at hand was an array of delightful fields and meadows and wooded lands . . . At my feet the Loch mirrored in its now placid waters the gaunt peaks that stretched around me. This is Colquhoun country and there, yonder, is my hotel and the sleepy little village of Luss.

Directly below me Rowardennan nestles into the hillside and further on the musically-sounding Balmaha. To the north, their peaks wreathed in drifting cloud, lay Ben Vorlich, Ben Lui and the faraway Ben Nevis, the latter the highest point in Britain. A mile or two to the North-West nestles Loch Katrine, surely one of the loveliest Lochs in all Scotland. Then come Lochs Achray and Vennacher, gems of the far-famed Trossach country. It was here that Scott wrote of the exploits of Rob Roy. The Baillie Nicoll Jarvie Inn bears the name of one of his heroes to this day.

There was a cairn of stones on the summit and several slips of paper bearing the names of walkers who had climbed Old Ben. I added my name and that of my old Club, but prudently omitted to include the time I'd taken on the climb. I had scarcely started on a lunch of sandwiches when a party of walkers appeared on the track below me. It pleased me to find them dressed in kilts and they later stated this allowed them much more freedom of movement and, contrary to my expectations, they found them very warm. Apart from the kilts their walking gear was very similar to our own. Meat rationing, which is very strict in Britain, presented quite a problem but they still managed to get away nearly every week-end. Their Club was a local one with quite a good membership. As my "leave" was nearly up I regretfully declined their warm invitation to join them on one of their trips.

By now the weather had changed again, as so often happens in these parts, and it was getting decidedly chilly. With my camera and the remains of lunch in the empty gas mask container that served as knapsack I set off on the long trip back to Luss. Dusk had fallen by the time I had reached the boat and no time was wasted in pulling back to the hotel. A hot bath was a luxury after such a strenuous day and it seemed fitting that the finale should take the form of Loch salmon in a well earned dinner.

A soft breeze straight from the heather-covered hills gently stirred the curtains as I lay that night reviewing my holiday. It had been very happy and had proved a wonderful experience. On the morrow I would start back to the Squadron . . . but what memories would go with me! Not easily would I forget the panorama outspread from the summit of Ben Lomond, nor the happy carefree appearance of the Loch itself on a windless day.

Scotland . . . in that short week's leave I learned to love you! I'm coming back . . . some day!



ON THE SHOALHAVEN.
KANANGRA CREEK.

—A. Gilroy (S.B.W.).





CONFERENCE.

—R. Cotter (S.E.W.)



KEDUMBA CROSSING.

—O. Brownlee (R.C.C. & S.B.W.)

THE BUSHWALKER

GREETINGS.

By E. ("Ted") CAINES PHILLIPS (River Canoe Club of N.S.W.).

"What the — are you blokes doin' over there? Get to — out of there before I make yer." Such a greeting was hurled at us across the river—the meandering, willow-fringed Paterson River—while the five "bucks" of the trip busied themselves cleaning out of the canoes the loads of water spiders and twigs that had deposited themselves in the craft during the afternoon's "run" amid low, overhanging willows and vines. The men took the utterance of the speaker calmly, but there was another in the party—a woman—who was busying herself inside the tent preparing the night's bedding. "Now get while the goin's good; if you're not — well shifted when I come back, I'll — well er, er, er." He broke off abruptly as our clubmate, Gene Pople, peered from the tent door to view the profane orator. Her appearance was like the music that calms the savage breast. "Er, er, er, I'm sorry, missus, didn't know you were there," etc., etc.

But for the feminine member of our party, we would certainly have been evicted without any consideration by this farmer. His greeting was a distinct contrast from the lovely river itself, which breathes "welcome" at every turn of its fascinating course.

"Won't you come in for a cup of tea." We had a few miles to go on a cross-country walk when we received this invitation from a kindly lady at an isolated cottage on a ridge overlooking Brisbane Water. She even escorted us a mile or so along the ridge in order to show us the location of the track down to Tascott.

What variety there is about the greetings we receive in the bush! The men, women and even children one meets, their attitudes, characteristics, mannerisms are indeed an education in themselves. Some you approach with every confidence, as though life friends; some you greet with uncertainty, while with others you may even be afraid to attempt conversation.

"Hey, you!" From the corner of my eye I espied two figures on my left as I plodded my way along the sandy track. Pretending to be afflicted with deafness, I paid no heed and walked on, busily pencilling some track "dope" which I required for the completion of a map of the area that I was preparing. A second glance from the corner of my eye substantiated my first impression that there were two figures; two there were, and they were MILITARY ones. My heart sank deeper than the lagoon beside which I walked. I was in a coastal and garrisoned area. This was before the Pacific War, but—war or no war—it was not going to prevent my securing information which I required for the completion of my walking map of the area; on it I had worked for many months. The second challenge from the two figures was not of the expected, "Halt, who goes there?" variety, but a more robust repetition of, "Hey, you; hey, YOU!" "Ten years hard" were my first thoughts; "farewell bushwalking, camping, canoeing." Escape was impossible. I submitted like a lamb, left the track and made my feeble, knee-knocking stagger to the two khaki-clad figures. "How yer goin', Ted?" asked the voice which had previously barked "you" at me. My heart rose higher than the 'plane which buzzed above us. The "you"-barker was none other than fellow clubmate, "Camel" Hill, who was garrisoned nearby and out for an afternoon's spell after long hours of looking into the sea for possible unwelcome visitors.

Definitely, this was the most scaring, nasty-taste-in-my-mouth, that's-torn-it greeting I've experienced.

"Where are ya goin'?" The query was both a greeting and an

THE BUSHWALKER

enquiry as we left the creek junction in order to trace a ridge westwards to our destination. The perplexed one was a roadmaker employed on the construction of the new "express highway" down the valley on which we had walked a little distance previously. The sight of shorts-clad humans leaving a well-made road and climbing a densely timbered ridge was too much for the bewildered observer. As I fully expected, his last advice was, "Mind ya don't get lost." This is an expression which I have had hurled at me again and again for twenty years, and each time I am thus advised, the insult is more and more acute. Oh, that people could realise that a ridge or a creek IS a track to a bushwalker!

"Been hiking?" queried a beslacked picnicker as we neared the top of "Nelly's" at the end of a Blue Dog-Cox's River walk. "No, bushwalking," corrected one of the party. "Oh!" was her rejoinder. "and where have you been?" The spokesman told her and she was fascinated with the name of Blue Dog. "The Blue Dog; how interesting; is it anywhere near Katoomba Falls?"

Yes, greetings received by us in the bush are certainly varied—from a scowling "squire," a kindly tenant, a fear-inspiring authority; from insult-conducing remarks (though not intended as such), to highly amusing situations at the expense of the enquirer.

The "coldest" bush greeting I've seen was when "Dunk" of the S.B.W. greeted each morning with a plunge into the icy creeks where we camped out Nattai way in mid-winter! Bur-r-r-r! I suggest the formation of an "iceberg" section in the Federation, of which she would surely deserve the honoured post of president. Affiliation might also be sought with the salt water variety of "icebergs" of the many Sydney beaches.

"My! you're brave people," admiringly spoke the local storekeeper's wife as we replenished supplies at Bellbrook after our fourth day out on our Macleay River canoe trip. The three ladies of the party may have been thrilled, but to the men, "nerts." "They might give yers a cocktail party when ya get down to Kempsey," drawled a yokel further down the river; "yairs—I reckon they might do that." The best greeting of this trip was the "reception committees" which awaited us at intervals of about ten miles; these consisted of the total populace of each village we passed through. With bush telegraphy equal to that of the abos, each "reception committee" would time our arrival to the minute and heap gifts of fruit, jam, honey, vegetables, etc., upon us until, at times, we were loaded to the gun-wales. Truly, the most hospitable bush greetings I've yet found!

In the memories of most of us there will always live greetings from the many bush folk who are the friends who mean so much to us. We are assured of sincere welcomes whenever we re-visit such good folk as the Carlons of Megalong, Blatches of Colo Vale, Rumseys of Tallong, Youngs of the Lower Shoalhaven, McMahons and Moodys of the Lower Cox's River. . . . Visits to these and our other friends are always good to look back on; in fact, they are treasured memories amongst canoeists and bushwalkers.

The humourist's greeting is always laughter-provoking. . . . Unwillingly parting company with his snug sleeping bag early one winter morning when on a mountain trip, humourist-photographer-S.B.W.-R.C.C.-ite Ray Bean, greeted the cloudy sky with, "This bushwalking is nothing but a heathen disregard for civilisation!"

I scrambled up with no grace and a few grunts. . . .
"Tiger for a Day" (S.B.W.).

THE NEW SOUTH WALES FEDERATION OF BUSH WALKING CLUBS

Governed by a Council comprising delegates from each affiliated club and having the assistance of the following standing committees:

The Conservation Bureau. The Search and Rescue Section.
The Information Bureau. The Publications Committee.

Affiliated Clubs:

The Bush Club.
The Campfire Club.
The Coast and Mountain Walkers of N.S.W.
The Mountain Trails Club of N.S.W.
The Railway Institute Bushwalkers.
The River Canoe Club of N.S.W.
The Rover Ramblers' Club.
The Rucksack Club (Sydney, N.S.W.).
The Sydney Bush Walkers.
The Trampers' Club of N.S.W.
The Warrigal Club of N.S.W.
The W.E.A. Ramblers.
Y.M.C.A. Ramblers' Club.

Information regarding any of the above Clubs or Committees may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary of the Federation:
Miss M. B. Byles, 3 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The Publications Committee wishes to thank Miss Kath. Parkes and Miss Dorothy Hasluck for their assistance with typing and the blocks, and Mrs. Dot. English Butler and Sgt. Rory Lofts for the sketches drawn by them. The Committee is also indebted to several members of the affiliated clubs who submitted cover designs before the art paper was located, which enabled us once more to have a photographic cover. The picture used was taken by Mr. Roley Cotter on a trip up Harry's River some years ago.

The Committee also conveys its thanks for donations towards the cost of the blocks to Miss M. B. Byles, Mr. L. G. Harrison, the Y.M.C.A. Ramblers' Club, the Sydney Bush Walkers, the Rucksack Club and the Rover Ramblers' Club.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Again this year the Publications Committee is indebted to "Paddy" Pallin for the room he made available for all its meetings and for his assistance in distributing the magazine. We are deeply grateful for this assistance, as well as for all the other things "Paddy" does to make life easier for bushwalkers.

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