

The Federation of Bushwalking Clubs , N.S.W.

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SEARCH AND RESCUE OF JOHN BURNSIDE 15-16TH SEPTEMBER, 1985

Every search and rescue incident is different and this one was more unusual than most. There was an injured person missing 'somewhere' near Mt Tomah South for 36 hours whose companions could not exactly say where they had left him.

On Friday night, 13th September, John Burnside, slightly more experienced than the very inexperienced Paul Douglas and Simon Rengger, camped at the top of the track to the Camels Hump. They had been advised that Claustral Canyon would only take three hours and were anticipating that an early start would allow John to start his part-time job in Sydney at 4.00p.m.

Accordingly they took no spare gear, such as dry clothes and matches, or food but were wearing wetsuits. John, unlike the other two though only had a short wetsuit.

As none of them had done Claustral before they were relying on track notes. Consequently, when they headed down the wrong side of the saddle from the Camel's Hump and into Rainbow Ravine they were unaware that they would enter Carmarthan Brook BELOW Claustral Canyon. This mistake was instrumental in both causing the resultant accident and making John so hard to find since Bushwalkers' Search and Rescue (S&R) only ascertained this mistake AFTER John had been rescued.

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Carmarthan Brook below Rainbow Ravine is far less constricted than Claustral Canyon and does not have any significant waterfalls. There are many long pools though and their track notes quickly got wet and disintegrated.

They remembered that before they could climb out of 'Claustral' at Rainbow Ravine they would have to pass Thunder Junction. Explorers Brook is the first major junction on the true right downstream but is approximately ten kilometres from Rainbow Ravine!

The long walk/wade/swimming through cold water meant that all three of them suffered some minor hypothermia with John suffering the most in his short wetsuit.

They called Explorers Brook 'Thunder Junction' and searched for a creek downstream on the (true) left to climb out of Carmarthan Brook, i.e. in their words to the Police and S&R "near Rainbow Ravine."

Just before leaving Carmarthan Brook, John exchanged his wetsuit for a long wetsuit to try and warm himself. The creek gained height quickly and included some five metre waterfalls. The only way up was to follow the pattern of ledges on one side or other.

It was obvious that they would be benighted part way up this creek. The ledge they eventually chose to camp on was 6-8m. above the creek. Around 9.00p.m. while John was still ill co-ordinated from the effects of hypothermia he moved about and somehow fell down to water level. The wetsuit

helped cushion his fall as well as providing a firm support to control bruising and swelling. John sustained bruised ribs, pelvis and a fractured femur. As the weather in the next 36 hours was dry and mild, the wetsuit also eventually warmed him sufficiently so that he was in good spirits when he was found. Considering his injuries his survival was unlikely without the wetsuit.

Early Sunday morning Simon and Paul BOTH left John to walk back to Mt Tomah for assistance.

On Saturday evening the Police were notified. The Police Rescue Squad asked Nick Eichorn and Keith Maxwell from S&R to assist with their local knowledge. The search teams all gathered around 6.30a.m. Sunday 15, at Mt Tomah.

Nick joined a party of Police that abseiled down the side of Claustral Canyon near the 'real' Thunder Junction. Their plan was to walk up to the base of Calcutta Falls, (Ranon Canyon Junction), and then retrace their steps to complete Claustral and exit via Ranbow Ravine.

This canyon party was already committed when Simon and Paul walked out of the bush near the track to the Camel's Hump at 9.30a.m. and to the waiting search parties. They were rather tired and still suffering some effects from hypothermia. This and their inexperience meant that their information was very poor and really, all we could say was, that they had walked out the same place as they had walked in (because we saw them walk out and we had found some of their spare gear).

Simon and Paul were placed in a helicopter to see if they could locate the creek that John was in. They did pick the correct creek, but there was some scepticism of their choice that was only resolved by finding John. John was said to be within 200 metres of Carmarthan Brook and they emphasised if you got to the Y junction you had gone too far. This was particularly misleading as John was subsequently found 150 metres above the Y junction.

The creek was too constricted and thickly vegetated to effectively search by helicopter so Constable Max Sladden and Keith thoroughly but unsuccessfully searched the true right bank up to the

Y junction which was 600m. up the creek. As Simon and Paul slowly recovered over Sunday and Monday their information steadily became more complete and accurate. Whilst in the side creek Max and Keith were advised that John was lying on the true left side of the creek. They thus returned to Carmarthan Brook via the true left searching even more thoroughly as the unsuccessful upstream search suggested that John may have been unconscious, or worse, and unable to call back.

Max and Keith were then winched back out and flown back to Mt Tomah. This left a problem. Had they been in the right creek? When you are placed in a helicopter preparatory to winching you cannot see where you are going. Thus you are dependent on the pilot's navigation. Now, in this rescue the pilot was flying to a spot picked from the air and 'said' to be near Rainbow Ravine. Once on the ground it was obvious from the direction of the gorge and side creeks that you were not near Rainbow Ravine but there were insufficient reference points to establish exactly which creek you were in.

During Sunday afternoon the large National Safety Council (NSC) helicopter arrived. To resolve this problem it was decided that this helicopter would be navigated, i.e. from the map, to the first creek past Explorers Brook and to winch in Simon, Max and Keith. Simon could then confirm from the ground whether this was the correct creek to find John in.

Simon did confirm this although he became fairly anxious for John when he too went up to the Y junction and could not find John. Unfortunately it was now late afternoon and Max, Simon and Keith had to immediately return to Carmarthan Brook if the helicopter was going to winch them out before dark.

Early Monday morning 50 bushwalkers and 70 Police and Bushfire Brigade Volunteers gathered at Mt Tomah. The plan was to search every side creek, that lead back to Mt Tomah, downstream from Rainbow Ravine to the first creek past Explorers Brook. Some search parties walked out from Mt Tomah while other parties were winched from helicopters into Carmarthan Brook at their respective side creek junctions. Each party included at least one policeman who would take charge once John was found.

At 10.45a.m. John was found 150m. up the true right fork of the Y junction by an S&R party led by Gordon Lee. Paramedics were winched directly down to John to prepare him for transport to Royal North Shore Hospital. John was winched into the NSC helicopter as all four of the Sydney television news helicopters recorded the event, and arrived at hospital around midday.

All search parties were out of the field by 3.00p.m., just ahead of bad weather.

In the debriefing, John's father was particularly thankful for all the effort done in saving John. The District Police Inspector and the parents of Simon and Paul were also very appreciative.

Lessons from this callout:

- 1) Don't go canyoning in winter. Spring does not really start till the September Equinox.
- 2) Never leave an injured person unattended. Injured persons often are disorientated and have sometimes gotten up and moved around. Also, on Sunday, John could hear Max and Keith calling but could not move. A healthy companion could have come down past the Y junction to guide Max and Keith to John.
- 3) Risks in outdoor activities are minimised by EQUIPMENT and EXPERIENCE and LEADERSHIP. John, Simon and Paul had virtually none of any of these factors. They were all strongly advised to join a club.
- 4) Among the most important skills the experienced club members teach beginners is NAVIGATION. This accident was caused by bad navigation and further complicated by the inability of Simon or Paul to give an accurate location for John.
- 5) The missing party carried no spare gear or food. Even minimal dry clothes and some food could have reduced the effects of exposure on the party sufficiently to avoid the accident.
- 6) John's wetsuit undoubtedly saved his life by helping to reduce his injuries from the fall and the resulting complications.
- 7) Helicopters cannot search gorges. They can, though, provide excellent transport for ground parties to quickly get to their search areas.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the walkers who attended this call-out. Clubs in attendance included Ramblers, Sydney University, Seventh Day Adventists, Sydney Bushwalkers, Three Peaks, Span Unlimited, Camden and National Parks Association.

Keith Maxwell
Director
Bushwalkers' Search & Rescue.

RESCUE OF EWIN HAYES

Recently we have seen several tragic accidents in outdoors activities. Some deaths have occurred from exposure, (hypothermia), and since by comparison to many other countries our winters are not severe, these deaths should have been avoidable. However, that still leaves some deaths from abseiling, falls.

Ewin Hayes, 22, and his two companions, Matthew Doonan, 20, and Michael Jarman, 23, were using their University holidays to do some exploring in the Kanangra Walls region. They had been attempting to descend beside a dry gully that is between Kalang Falls and Kanangra Falls.

They started their trip on Sunday, 25th August, 1985, and by evening had only managed to descend about 150m. They then withdrew to camp further up on the ridge on a small flat spot above the top waterfall of Kalang Falls. Why they chose to camp here when they were only 20 minutes from their car is questionable.

The area where they had been descending is typical of the Kanangra Gorge. Extremely steep, extremely loose, of very easily cleaved rocks with many large cliffs nearby but most spectacular.

On Monday morning, Ewin left his friends at breakfast and descended to their last abseil point to retrieve equipment. It seems that they had an excessive amount of equipment as Ewin made several trips across the steep slopes before falling on the last trip 80-100m. No one saw him fall so consequently we do not know exactly when or from where he fell. The accident possibly occurred around 10.00a.m. Ewin suffered head injuries, and internal injuries but unmercifully was not killed outright.

Some time later his friends came searching for him. Ewin was not visible from the top and actually was

conscious enough to call his friends to him. Ewin's position was still precarious though and he had to be tied to a tree for safety. Meanwhile, Michael Jarman set off on the time consuming process of walking back to their car and thence driving to Jenolan Caves to raise the alarm. Late afternoon an NP&WS Ranger, Ian Brown, was guided to Ewin and pronounced him dead.

Even if an effective rescue could have been started early enough it would have been a very difficult and dangerous undertaking. Fierce winds eliminated rescue by helicopter. The steep terrain would have required a rescue party of 30-50+ persons. Naturally great caution would have been necessary to avoid further casualties.

Bushwalkers S&R was called in on Monday night to provide just two persons to act as guides. Nick Eichhorn and Keith Maxwell left around midnight. Their role was to speed up the retrieval of the body and minimise danger in the anticipated ground rescue.

Our rendezvous with the Police Rescue Squad (P.R.S.) was Jenolan Caves and we all left for Kanangra Walls at 5.15a.m.

Fortunately the winds had died down overnight but without seeing the body the P.R.S. could not be sure that a helicopter lift was possible. Thus we still needed to carry in some climbing equipment with the stretcher.

The rescue party also included Ian Brown plus some country Police all under Sgt Dick Lamb, P.R.S.: a total of about 14 persons.

Two police were lowered with the stretcher to the body. They were kept extremely busy preparing the body whilst ensuring their own safety on the steep terrain.

At 10.50a.m. Ewin was winched out by Polair, the Police helicopter, and transferred to an Ambulance at the Kanangra Walls car park. Each policeman was then in turn winched out. The winchings were all difficult. From our vantage point we looked down through the trees on a half obscured, by the ledges, helicopter. Between two of the winchings the pilot had a cigarette to calm his nerves! Any wind in Kanangra Gorge would have made the winchings impossible.

The Channel 7 helicopter filmed some of the rescue party and the lift of Ewin.

All persons from the rescue party were back at the Kanangra Walls car park by 11.45a.m. After having lunch at Jenolan Caves, we returned home to an early night!

Keith Maxwell
Director
Bushwalkers Search & Rescue

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I noted with some concern in your 'Lost, Found' column (Newsletter Vol. 11 No. 1 1985) a piece about some rubbish 'left by some forgetful boy scouts.' As an active walker most of my life I know the reputation of scouts within walking circles, and I must admit some of it is justified. Too often, however, any rubbish left by careless campers is attributed to scouts without any further thought.

Over the last few years I have become involved in scouts as a Venturer leader (Venturers are 15 to 18 years old girls and boys) and would like to make a few comments.

The general standard of bush camping within scouts is fairly low but some groups who are getting proper training would put some 'bushwalkers' to shame in their concern and care of the bush. I believe the low standard is caused by a lack of environmentally aware people with bushwalking skills who are willing to contribute as leaders or advisers.

It is also unfortunate that the age group that most offends are generally not considered by their parents to be the tidiest people under any circumstances.

The Scouting movement is environmentally aware and any scouts who do leave rubbish in the bush, and will not accept advice on how to deal with it, should be reported to Branch headquarters (74-76 Burwood Rd, Burwood 2134) preferably noting the name of the group involved. The other positive step that can be taken is to either volunteer as a leader, or contact your local group and let them know you are willing to help occasionally in training scouts in proper bushwalking methods.

If some sort of Scouting/Bushwalkers Federation liaison were to be set up, I would be most happy to contribute. I would also welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue with anyone who has something to contribute.

Robert Pallin

The earlier Greek mythological names were given to features on the Central Plateau by Surveyor-General Frankland in the mid-1830s. Surveyor James Scott followed the practice about ten years later and others have continued to do so until quite recently.

Thanks to Michael Clennett of the Nomenclature Board for providing much of the information below.

LAKE ARTEMIS: One of the Orion Lakes in the Mountains of Jupiter. Officially assigned by the Nomenclature Board in 1973 on the suggestion of Mr H.D. Reed who was until recently a regular visitor to the area. Artemis was the Greek name for the Roman God Diana, Goddess of the Chase. Artemis summoned a scorpion to sting Orion on the heel for touching Artemis.

LAKE ATHENA: Another of the Orion Lakes found in the Mountains of Jupiter and within the Central Reserve. Name assigned by the Board in 1955, being one of a number of names considered. Whose suggestion it was is not known. Athena was the Greek Goddess of War.

MOUNT ACHILLES: Cradle Mt - Lake St Clair National Park, North West of Mt Ossa. Name assigned by the Board in 1950, having been suggested by the Scenery Preservation Board. Originally named Mt Bonwick by J.W. Beattie in 1901.. Achilles was the son of Peleus and Thetis (see later) and named by Chiron because the young Achilles had never been suckled. He was dipped by Thetis in the River Styx, which made him invulnerable, except by that part of the heel by which his mother held him. Achilles' heel is a rocky column near Mt Achilles.

LAKE APOLLO: name assigned by board in 1971 having been ascertained from an old Mineral Chart, Tyndall. This is a Biblical name, that of the eloquent Jew referred to in Acts, Chapter 18, verse 24 etc.

APOLLO TARN: One of the smaller tarns found in the Labyrinth. Name suggested by the Hobart Walking Club in 1979 and subsequently approved by the Board. It has since been found that this tarn had been named the Pool of Memories on the suggestion of the Climbers Club in 1971. Apollo was the greatest god of both the Greeks and Romans.

fine valley in the Cradle Mountain - Lake St Clair National Park. Originally named the Porcupine by (alluding) to the spine-like appearance of the rocks on the ridge) by G. Chapman and M. Urquhart in 1935. Re-named The Acropolis by A. R. Lowe in 1938 after the Acropolis in Athens because of the dominating effect on the surrounding terrain.

Langana
August, 1985.

ABSEILING KALANG FALLS

(1)
We abseiled there with the wind in our hearts,
With the breadth of the rock at our face,
By following the leap of the waterfall
We found our beings were made of space.

The echoes and depth of the canyons
We carry around inside.
By listening there in silence
Nature becomes our guide.

(11)
I went inside the waterfall
I wanted to have a look.
I didn't take my abseil gear
I didn't take a book.

It was very, very noisy
And I got very wet
But I didn't get pneumonia
At least I haven't yet!

There were billions of shining drops
And I counted every one.
Each was a tiny prism
Holding the heart of the sun.

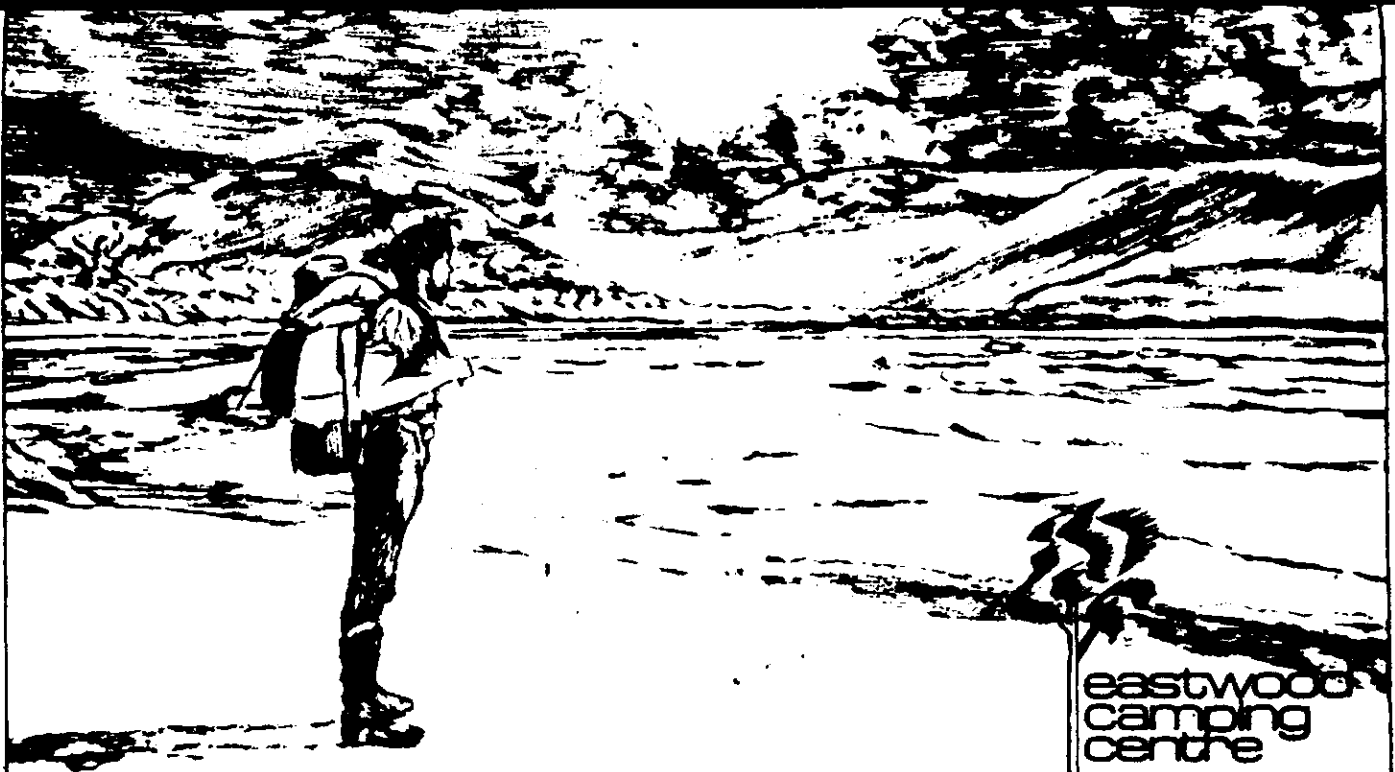
I asked of every shining drop
"Why do you keep on fall?
You never seem to stop
Your joyful, happy calling."

They said, "We have a secret
To hold within your being.
We can heal the pain you have
And wash your suffering.

Go within the waterfall,
Hold it in your heart.
If you're patient and very still,
It will guide you and will fill
The painful space that living kills."

So sit down there in silence
And don't do anything.
Just listen to the waterfall
And soon your heart will sing.

by
Rose White.



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N.S.W. ROGAINING CHAMPIONSHIPS MARCH 22/23 1986

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Correspondence concerning the Newsletter should be addressed to The Editor, Newsletter, Box 209 G.P.O. Sydney 2001

WHEN: March 22/23, 1986
STARTS: 8 hour & 24 hour — 12.00 noon
 3 hour — 1.00 p.m.
WHERE: South of Sutherland, north of Bulli.

— Andrew Blakers (02) 521 5532
 — Mike Drew (02) 521 8089

FROM THE CLUBS

(News from Club Magazines etc.)

- Steel Traps

Walkers are advised to watch out for steel traps, particularly walking along animal paths in areas within easy reach by vehicles. One was buried in river sand at a crossing point on Tullyangela Creek before Dungeon Canyon (Canberra B.W.C.).