

# THE Bushwalker



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## WALKING ACROSS THE BLUE MOUNTAINS-REVISITED

Readers may remember an article in "The Bushwalker" in May 1996 about the Scripture Union Bushwalkers' proposal for investigation of the feasibility of a continuous "Blue Mountains Crossing

Tony Miller  
Scripture Union Bushwalking Club



Waterfall - North Hazelbrook

has happened. For example, a "Blue Mountains Walking Track Heritage Study" was released in November 1998. The aim of that study was to "identify the significant cultural heritage aspects of the walking tracks in the Blue Mountains region and recommend how that significance can be maintained". The study covers over three hundred constructed walking tracks more than 25 years old. The consultants Jim Smith and MUSEscape did a great job and the NPWS launch at the Hydro Majestic was a pleasure to attend. The possibility of including a Blue Mountains crossing in the establishment of a national network of tracks gets a supporting mention in the vision statement to the MUSEscape volume of the Report.

Walk".

Through Confederation the proposal was discussed with representatives of a number of the land managers and Hon Bob Debus MP, Member for Blue Mountains. All indicated that they thought the concept was worth looking at further. However, with lots happening since including the draft Blue Mountains NP draft plan of management, Grose Wilderness assessment and the Blue Mountains World Heritage nomination, I guess the concept has had to take a back seat, perhaps awaiting consideration in a broader context.

This is certainly not to say nothing

Scripture Union "Bushies" have now walked across the Blue Mountains twice, once via a series of day walks and later in a series of three overnight and two day walks. The latter perhaps involved more uninterrupted bushland, and maybe more on that in the future. For now, here are some thoughts on one possibility for day walkers to consider for crossing the Mountains. This is not a walk guide, so you would need to obtain appropriate maps, make enquiries, be suitably equipped and experienced and "tread lightly" (in a group, preferably with a club). While you take responsibility for any such

walk you do, our club would be pleased to hear from you if you are interested in doing this or a similar traverse.

### LAPSTONE TO GLENBROOK VIA GLENBROOK GORGE

Starting from Lapstone Station you can take the unconstructed track along the Nepean River to Glenbrook Creek and rock hop along Glenbrook Gorge. On a hot day you could enjoy a swim at Jellybean Pool or Blue Pool. This one is not a rainy weather walk.

### GLENBROOK TO BLAXLAND INC LAPSTONE ZIG ZAG

The Lapstone Zig Zag is the route of a former section of railway line. Visit historic Knapsack Gully Viaduct (built 1864), Lennox Bridge (built in 1833 and used until 1970) and enjoy fine view of Cumberland Plain from Elizabeth Lookout. Later you pass Glenbrook Lagoon, which I understand was seen by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth on 12 May 1813. There is some suburban walking to finish the day.

### BLAXLAND TO WOODFORD VIA ST HELENA RIDGE

This is a leg-stretcher and for experienced walkers only. After taking the track from the southern end of Ross St to Glenbrook Creek, we followed the "Bull Ant Track" up to and along the ridge on the northern side of St Helena Gully (you might meet the Bull Ant Runners, a local running club). On reaching Bunyan fire trail we turned south then took St Helena and Oaks fire trails to Woodford. I've yet to see the "Bull Ant Track" on any map, so if you don't know anyone who is familiar with the track, consider walking from Glenbrook to Woodford instead (especially leg stretching!). That route is via Duck Hole track, Duck Hole link to St Helena Ridge then St Helena and Oaks Fire trails. Keep an eye and ear out for mountain-bike riders.

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## THE BUSHWALKER

**Contributions**, letters to the editor, original cartoons and suggestions are welcome. They should be sent to the address below. Except for short notes or letters, all contributions should be accompanied with text file on three and a half inch floppy disk in IBM format or E-Mail.

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The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc represents approximately 67 clubs with a total membership over 10,000 bushwalkers. Formed in 1932, the Confederation provides a united voice on conservation and other issues, runs training courses for members, and provides for the public a free wilderness search and rescue service. People interested in joining a bushwalking club are invited to write to the Secretary Bushwalkers NSW at the above address for information on clubs in their area.

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### THE BUSHWALKER

is the magazine of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc. It's published quarterly. The aim of the magazine is to provide articles and information of interest to the members of clubs affiliated with the Confederation and Bushwalkers generally. Any opinions expressed by individual authors do not always represent the official views of the Confederation.



# WALKING IN THE TIGER LEAPING GORGE YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA



In  
October I  
was part of  
a group of  
Intrepid  
Walkers who  
tackled The  
Tiger Leaping  
Gorge (approx.

40K) in the upper  
reaches of the Yangtze River, Yunnan.  
Our walk started from a tiny village  
called Bai Shui Tai which was reached  
by a 5 hour bus ride from the city of  
Zhongdian - a high cold city in the  
mountains. The bus ride was very  
scenic, through quite amazing mountain

own language and picture writing - quite  
different from Chinese.

The next morning we were up early  
to start the first day of our walk. Unfortunately I had not been well in the night,  
and was suffering from the dreaded  
stomach problems to which visitors are  
subject in that part of the world, but  
there was no option but to put my 'best  
foot forward' and carry on. We were a  
party of 15 in all, including our leader,  
the Naxi guide Sean and his Australian  
wife Margot, so a small horse and driver  
was hired to carry our water and other

supplies for the day's  
trek. I was thankful that  
my pack could go on  
the little horse too.

Our course was  
along the main road at  
first, then down steeply  
into the valley through  
a quaint little village,  
winding our way down  
a muddy track through  
the higgledy-  
piggledy houses  
and outbuildings.  
It was harvest  
time, and cobs of  
Indian corn were  
drying every-

reached the village of HaBa and our  
guest house. Chinese style buildings  
round a court yard, outbuildings round  
two sides with grain, animals and so on.  
Basins of hot water were provided for us  
to wash in our rooms. The toilet had the  
usual view over a cliff, but the beds were  
warm and comfortable with a cotton  
doona for covering. Our hostess and  
helpers provided a delicious meal for the  
party, but I just kept to rice. I shared a  
downstairs room with our guides in  
preference to an upstairs room with  
other members of our party. Chinese  
homes have two storeys, and most have  
folding doors opening to the courtyard.

Up early again next morning, and a  
breakfast of very tasty noodles was  
provided. Our guides had located a  
truck going part of the way to their  
guest house at Walnut Garden, which  
was to be our next destination, and for a  
fee of 100 Yuan, about \$20, the driver  
agreed to take Margot and I, and also  
some of luggage, on to the guest house  
in the Tiger Leaping Gorge. In my  
rather weakened state I was happy to

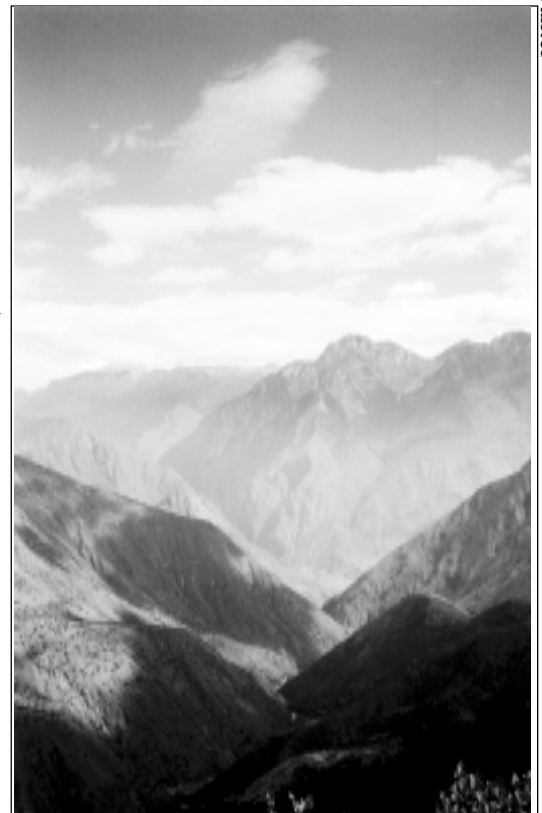


Author with Naxi guide "Very Nice" bridge in background

areas, with the occasional village in  
valleys below, and road workers camps  
along the sides of the road here and  
there. Some incredible roads have been  
blasted into and over the mountains  
during recent years, connecting popu-  
lated and previously isolated valleys,  
and providing access to the outside  
world. Landslides and fallen rocks are a  
constant hazard, particularly during the  
wet summer season, and the  
roadmenders must be kept pretty busy  
with repairs. One camp even had a  
Tibetan yurt with a Lama in residence.

About lunch time we arrived at our  
destination, a very basic guest house in  
a small village. A hot lunch of noodles  
and vegetables was brought to us in the  
outside eating area, and the afternoon  
was occupied by a tour up the hillside  
opposite to visit the limestone terraces,  
which are a famous feature of the  
region. Semicircular basins of gleaming  
white limestone terraces marching down  
to the base of the mountain. The area is  
the home of the Naxi minority people,  
and the Dongba culture, who have their

where, on roofs, courtyards, rocks -  
anywhere that presented a dry airy  
surface. Through fields, along  
terrace walls, up a fir-clad mountain  
side, and eventually back onto the  
road again, where we had a lunch  
break. Not feeling too good, my  
lunch was a couple of bananas,  
while the rest of the party tucked  
into rolls, with all sorts of fillings,  
biscuits etc. provided by Margot.  
Sheer determination carried me on.  
A pass high on the mountains in  
front of us was pointed out. Just up  
to there, then we begin the descent.  
All this time we had been at an  
altitude of about 3,500m. The  
descent started well enough, but got  
steeper as we continued, down to  
the valley. No good for one suffer-  
ing vertigo, we had been warned !  
The last part of the descent was  
across a landslide of white limestone  
chips, with just about enough room for  
a booted foot on the track. No hand  
holds and a very slippery slide down  
down down - just don't look! At last we



Yunnan Mountain - taken at about 3500m

accept this arrangement, and the early  
arrival at Walnut Garden would enable  
Margot to get the evening meal prepared  
for the rest of the party. I climbed in

*Continued on page 4*





from page 3

front with the driver, the passenger with his little son, and Margot got on the back with the luggage. Up and along mountain roads, wonderful views and amazing terrain. We let the passenger down at the end of a very rough track where he was to catch a ferry (more of this later) Then through a huge half finished housing estate, which Margot said had been at a standstill for about 2 years. Right in the middle of no-where, very poor soil, bleak and unproductive looking. Hundreds of

houses, built on a little ledge hacked out of the mountainside. Water is provided by a clear natural spring, from which the guest house takes its name. Cooking facilities are in an outhouse, on a primitive woodburning range, and a two burner gas cooker. No daylight except through the open door, but there is power for a while at night for the one longlife bulb hanging from the rafters. The group arrived mid-afternoon, hot and tired after about 18k through the

mountains. Showered and refreshed, they enjoyed a wonderful evening meal, and settled down in the outdoor eating area to watch the news by satellite and later a video film. It was quite a strange experience to watch TV in such a remote place. Technology in China is advancing so quickly that nearly every village has its satellite dish although household

water is still carried from the streams.

Next day was a day of rest, which we were all glad to enjoy. One or two energetic members made the long steep descent to the Yangtze River, and got back just as a violent thunder storm echoed through the mountains. Torrential rains cascaded down the slopes on the other side of the Gorge, and we could see rocks falling.

Next morning we were due to walk the last 23+k out of the Gorge to Qaitou where our main baggage had been stored, but at 6.00am we rose to pouring rain and darkness. Early breakfast, and off we set along the road. Reaching a waterfall about 3k along, we found it impassable. Water cascading down the mountain side had washed away what

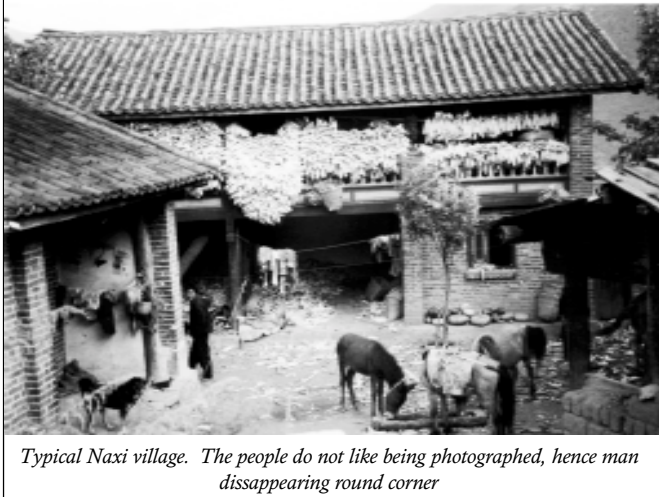
was left of the road, and rocks were falling on the other side. We retraced our steps back past the Spring Guest House, and continued down the Gorge in the opposite direction. Rain was still falling, there were rock falls along the road, bits had subsided from the edges, far down into the Gorge, and there was the ever present danger of falling rocks. After about 12k we left the road and scrambled up a steep hillside track, over a stream which operated a water-driven threshing machine, and shortly found ourselves among the unfinished houses, and down the rough track as far as the truck had gone 2 days before. Now began our descent to the Yangtze River ferry. The track zig-zagged steeply down on and on, and the last stretch above the swift flowing river was a little ledge hacked out of the rock cliff, just enough room for one boot at a time. At the bottom waited the ferry barge. The boatmen were very skilled in handling their craft, which they took upstream, and let the current bring them back down, to the landing place. Again, another steep scramble up the high banks, till the level fields were reached. We teetered along the banks of paddyfields, slithered through the mud, watched by the occasional placid buffalo. Eventually we reached a small poor village, where we were to get a bus. Our guide sent someone to make a phone call, and we were told our bus would come for us 'in a few minutes', from the nearby town of naji.

Meantime the local children and several men regarded us with much amusement and teasing. We were invited to wait in the warmth of the shop' courtyard, where a type of council meeting was going on. We understood it concerned celebrations for the millennium, and there was much heated argument.

Our bus duly arrived, and we thankfully piled on, wet and tired. We could look up the Gorge and see the mist and rain shrouding the mountains where we had walked.

The bus journey to LiJiang was 3 hours of mountain road, almost nil visibility, fog and rain - so rough that the back of the bus became airborne on a couple of occasions - but we slept peacefully through the journey, blissfully unaware of cascading waterfalls, rock falls, passing other buses etc.etc.

We had walked in the Tiger Leaping Gorge.



Typical Naxi village. The people do not like being photographed, hence man disappearing round corner

much needed houses standing there like sad ghosts, but it would be hard to persuade people to settle there. Maybe some Chinese speculator was loosing a lot of money? Hard to say. Then back on the new mountain road to Walnut Garden. Up until a couple of years ago the only access to Tiger Leaping Gorge was a bridle track over the mountains and through the Gorge. Now the new road, blasted into the hillsides, provides access for vehicles able to brave the rough conditions. I helped Margot and two young girls with lunch preparations, had a HOT shower, and my clothes went into the washing machine - unheard of luxuries in such a remote spot.

The guest house is about 13 years old, and consists of two typical Chinese

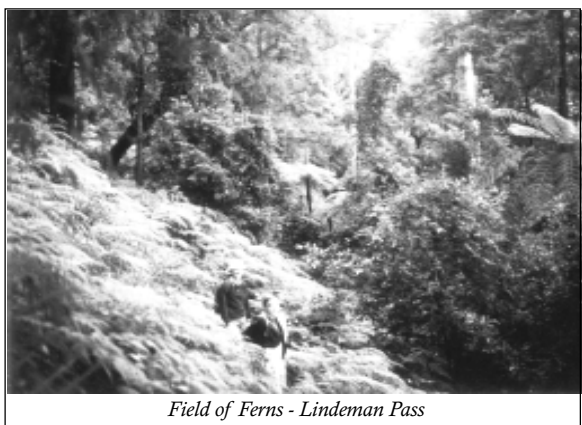


Spring Guest House - Walnut Garden. House facing T L Gorge, Yantze River is way, way down.



## WOODFORD - HAZELBROOK VIA WATERFALLS OF NORTH HAZELBROOK

Have some fun guessing the height of the many waterfalls you will encounter along the way. This walk includes the 'Transit of Venus' Track, Three Waterfalls Track (Mabel, Edith and Fairy Falls) and later the fairly eroded track from Winbourne Ave to Burgess Falls, Horseshoe Falls and Lyre Bird Glen Falls. We connected the two sections by basically following the powerlines between Clearview Pde and Winbourne Ave. Some local people indicated this was OK. There is a dogleg in the track on the Winbourne Ave side so be careful not to end up in someone's back yard. To be sure, you could perhaps check with the council regarding land ownership under the powerlines at that road.



*Field of Ferns - Lindeman Pass*

## HAZELBROOK-LAWSON VIA WATERFALLS OF STH HAZELBROOK & STH LAWSON

Many people are familiar with the waterfalls of South Lawson, but have you visited Bedford Pool, Terrace Falls and Victor Falls south of Hazelbrook. The track could do with a bit of a tidy-up and signposting at trackheads, but this is a refreshing walk at any time of the year. In late winter/early spring maybe check first whether any control burning is scheduled.

## LAWSON-WENTWORTH FALLS INC SECTION OF BRUCES WALK

Another one for experienced walkers. We started on the fire trail that runs west from the northern end of the picnic area accessed from St Bernards Drive. After a few hundred metres on the fire trail a track leads steeply downhill to the creek that runs through Walkers Glen. The track crosses the creek and ascends,

initially steeply, to another fire trail. It's not hard to get from there to Kent St although I think some sections of the fire trail in this vicinity run through private property. A formalised route through Lanasa Park from North Lawson Park to Kent St (avoiding private property) would be a help.

The section of Bruces Walk from Kent St to Frenchmans Rd is well mapped in Jim Smith's "How to See the Blue Mountains" (2nd ed.) and is marked with white tags on trees. However, the track is narrow, unmaintained and features umteen zig zags and more than the occasional fallen tree. After the section of Bruces Walk we headed along Railway Pde, but did the side trip to Water Nymphs Dell – an underrated gem in my view featuring a cool mossy amphitheatre with a couple of delightful waterfalls.

## WENTWORTH FALLS TO LEURA

This is getting into "bushwalking traffic" but what views (eg Jamison Valley, Kings Tableland). We followed Darwin's Walk (he was there in 1836), the Undercliff/Overcliff Track and later stopped for a break and a drink at the "Conservation Hut" off the western end of Fletcher St. Next came the track across Lillians Bridge, the new section of the Grand

Clifftop Walk behind the Fairmont Resort and, after a little road walking, the tracks to the Pool of Siloam and from there to Lyre Bird Dell

## LEURA (LYREBIRD DELL TRACKHEAD)-ECHO POINT

Even more "traffic" here but Katoomba is rightly a place of national and international renown. The excellently restored section of track from the clifftops down to Leura Forest is a credit to NPWS. You might want to walk along Federal Pass to the junction with Dardanelles Pass then double back to ascend the Giant Stairway past the Three Sisters to Echo Point. If the thought of possible crowds is a bit much, and your group consists of experienced walkers, consider walking down Roberts Pass (Leura) and along Lindeman Pass to join up with Federal Pass. You need to watch your footing and the spider webs but this is a beautiful walk with lush vegetation and memorable cliff and valley views.

## ECHO POINT-EXPLORERS' TREE

This presents an option for more fine clifftop walking, taking in part of the Prince Henry Walk, Katoomba Falls Reserve, the grounds of the scenic railway, Cahills Lookout and the track from the western end of Stuarts Rd to Nellies Glen Rd. The last of these tracks is very well located and constructed and offers scenic opportunities ranging from valley views to ferny gullies. As it is a constructed track, I'm surprised not to have found it on a map yet.

If you don't want to stay on the ridge, fit and experienced walkers could venture down the Devil's Hole Track and proceed to Explorers Tree via Nellies Glen. This is strenuous but rewarding. It also includes part of the famous Six Foot Track.

## EXPLORERS TREE - MEDLOW BATH

The private property between Pulpit Hill Rd and Delmonte Rd, Medlow Bath presents a problem. We found a "walkers only" sign at the end of Pulpit Hill Rd but there is only an "out and back" walk via a series of unmapped fire trails and tracks. We eventually reached a rock cairn where the track ended. If you walk along the side of the highway from Pulpit Hill, keeping any guardrail between you and the traffic, you will eventually get to Medlow Bath, although it is not particularly pleasant going.

At Medlow Bath things improve. From Bellevue Cres you can walk down to Three Brothers Rocks, then along the old Glen Rosa Track (not entirely easy to follow), past the Colosseum and around the recently re-cleared clifftop track to the "Sunbath". You finish at the Hydro Majestic. Tell the staff there before you start this walk as it goes across the Hydro's land.

An alternative is to walk from Echo Point to North Katoomba and join up with Bruces Walk to take you to Katoomba Airstrip. If you take this option, which is suitable for experienced walkers, you could check out the Hydro Majestic tracks on another day.

## MEDLOW BATH BLACKHEATH VIA EVANS LOOKOUT & GOVETTS LEAP

Few bushwalkers would need to be told there are majestic views of the Grose Valley on offer between Evans Lookout and Govetts Leap. Our walk had the added advantage of getting us



from the vicinity of Katoomba Airstrip down to the Grand Canyon via the "Old Point Pilcher" track retailer Mark Foy had cut in 1907. This old constructed track appears in pretty good shape considering the passing of the years. There is a bit of a rock ledge then a short steep section just before you reach the floor of the canyon. We visited the NPWS' Centre at Govetts Leap finished the day by travelling along Popes Glen Track. This walk is fantastic on a fine sunny day in Spring.

### BLACKHEATH TO MT VICTORIA VIA KANIMBLA ESCARPMENT (INCLUDING MT BOYCE)

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Add views of the Kanimbla Valley to those already enjoyed of the Grose. Mt Boyce is a favourite with rock climbers and this has resulted in a couple of tracks off the railway access road. A fairly large area of land along the clifftops is now in public ownership. Jim Smith's book "How to See the Blue Mountains" is a help with this one. When we reached a point below "Conical Rock" we scrambled up from the footpad to the rock so as to avoid the western continuation of the clifftop pad which went much too close to the edge for my liking. From Conical Rock we took another footpad (that is well away from the cliffs) west a short distance to a

formed walking track that runs straight back up to the railway access road.

A side trip to Fairy Bower or Cox's Cave and then Mt Piddington and One Tree Hill (1,111m above sea level and the highest point in Blue Mountains LGA) is a good way to end this walk. The township of Mt Victoria was once called One Tree Hill.

### MT VICTORIA TO HARTLEY VALE

The tracks in this area would be pretty well known to many club bushwalkers. The Department of Land and Water Conservation will be able to provide you with information. We walked along Berghofers Rd and visited Berghofers Pass, which was in use for a time until cars were powerful enough to negotiate Victoria Pass. Mt York

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provides you with plenty of history to think about as does Cox's Road down into the Valley. Lockyer's Road/Track and Lawsons Long Alley are alternative routes to the valley, further to the east. There is a camping area at Hartley Vale at the end of Lockyer's track.

Are We There Yet?

Well yes, actually. From Hartley Vale you will need a car shuffle or strong legs for a return to Mt Victoria. However, a final day walk from Hartley Vale to Lithgow was fun for us, even though walking along the side of The Gap Rd was a bit dicey. You could avoid this by using a car shuffle and finishing your trip by walking from the top of Hassans Walls (where there are some great views of Hartley Valley) to Lithgow via Bracey Lookout. You can now get down the hill to the town via a set of steps that run from the water reservoir below the lookout to Bridge St.

There is certainly more than one way to walk across the Blue Mountains, but maybe these ideas from our club will whet your appetite. It was a bit of a challenge, scenically excellent and of considerable educational value. Hope some of you may "have a look"!

Some References:

Neil Paton "Treks in New South Wales"

Robert Sloss "Bushwalking, Cycling - Jogging in the Lower Blue Mountains"

Jim Smith "How to See the Blue Mountains" (2nd ed.)

Tyrone T Thomas "100 Walks in New South Wales" (4th ed.)

## SOMEONE'S GOT TO DO IT!

We are two Australians ex-teachers living in India.

Four times a year we take walks to the Darjeeling region and the foothills of the Himalayas.

The walks are for all ages but designed with people like us in their middle-age in mind.

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David Rowe is home to talk to walkers who might be interested in learning about the tours.

Call Sandra at Smnall World Travel 03 9836 2377 and leave a contact number.

David will cal you back and answer questions and send more information if you want. A walk that will stay with you forever may only be months away. Why not join us, after all, Someone's Got To Do It.





# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## ACCESS TO CANYONS

Dear Editor,  
I hope you can find  
space to publish the

following. Please give it what publicity  
you can among bushwalkers and  
bushwalking clubs.

Please report all sightings of wild  
pigs and/or wild pig shooters to Na-  
tional Parks and Wildlife  
Service Rangers, with  
date, time, location and  
vehicle registration  
numbers where appropriate. Especially  
in Kosciuszko National Park over the  
coming summer season.

Pig shooting in National Parks is an  
illegal activity involving guns, dogs,  
illegal 4WD access and resultant  
damage to the environment.

It disrupts the attempts of rangers to  
get rid of the pigs because hunters shoot  
at selected pigs and scatter the herd  
whereas NPWS staff are trying to locate  
and contain the herds and shoot or  
remove all the pigs.

Marion Woof - Killara

### THE RODRIGUEZ PASS: CENTENARY WALK ALONG HISTORIC BLUE MOUNTAINS TRACK

Andy Macqueen  
Springwood Bushwalking Club

It's a hundred years since the track  
from Govetts Leap to Evans Lookout  
via the Grose Valley was completed. On  
Sunday 16 April 2000 there will be an  
informal re-enactment of the opening  
day, on which 40 people walked the  
entire track and enjoyed a luncheon  
down on Govetts Creek.

If you can walk and are reasonable  
fit you are invited to join in - the only  
condition is that you dress and equip  
yourself appropriately for the year 1900!  
Form a group and join in for an interest-  
ing and fun day.

This event is being held by the  
Friends of Blue Gum Forest in conjunc-  
tion with the NPWS. For more informa-  
tion phone Ranger Cath Ireland, NPWS  
- 02 4787 8877.

3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999

I would like to point out to your  
readers that access to many canyons in  
the Blue Mountains will be seriously  
restricted in the near future.

Because the Wollemi Wilderness  
Area was declared early in 1999, the  
NPWS is bound to erect locked gates on  
many of the roads into the Wollemi.

For example, the road that gives  
access to the Hole-in-the-Wall Canyon  
is to be closed near Newnes Forest,  
meaning an extra 2 km walk each way  
to approximately 30 canyons.

The roads to Galah, Surefire, Heart  
Attack, Dumbano and Yarramun  
canyons are also to be closed, adding  
approximately 5 km each way.

Mountain bikes will be permitted on  
some of the locked roads, since they  
will be maintained for fire control  
purposes.

But overall this large group of  
canyons will become much more  
difficult. Most people who have enjoyed  
doing canyons in a day-trip from Sydney  
will be forced to go to other canyons -  
some of which are over-crowded.

The rangers at Blackheath believe  
that the gates will be in place for the  
2000 - 2001 canyon season

Objections to the closures - which  
canyonners expressed in response to the  
Draft plan of Management for the  
Wilderness Area. - seem to have been  
ignored.

Perhaps the influential members of  
the conservation movement - victors of  
many good and worthwhile battles in the  
past - are becoming too powerful and  
too self-righteous. It is significant that  
this lobby is composed of just a very  
few individuals.

What has happened to the "Freedom  
of the Hills" ?

Yours sincerely

**Rick Jamieson (President Rich-  
mond Squash and Bushwalking Club)**

Editor's note:

The views expressed by Mr  
Jamieson are not the views of the  
Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs.  
Along with many individual canyoners  
and clubs, Confederation supported the  
declaration of the Wollemi Wilderness  
and the inherent road closures. It is  
ironic that he is supporting, for the  
convenience of some canyoners, the  
continued existence of roads originally  
pushed through by coal miners and  
foresters, and becoming ever more  
popular with some rogue four-wheel  
drivers and trail-bike riders.

Confederation's representative  
on the Blue Mountains NPWS 1996-99  
Advisory Committee, Andy Macqueen,  
makes the following comments on Mr  
Jamieson's letter:

It will be a sad day when the  
worth of wildness is determined accord-  
ing to accessibility by a one-day car trip  
from Sydney.

In the sixties Rick wrote an  
inspirational guide-book on  
bushwalking, featuring all sorts of long  
and adventurous walks throughout the  
Blue Mountains and elsewhere. It is  
strange that he should these days be  
protesting that to enjoy a canyon people  
one might have to walk a bit or be  
forced to go elsewhere because you  
can't do it on a day trip from Sydney.  
Has he forgotten that it can actually be  
enjoyable, even uplifting, to stroll  
through the bush? Or has he succumbed  
to the attitudes of a fast society that is  
only happy with never-ending and  
forever heightening thrills?

Surely part of the charm and  
value of canyons is their very wildness  
and remoteness. The adventure of  
canyoning should encompass the  
experience of getting there if possible of  
discovering the canyon for yourself,  
preferably without guidebook in hand.  
Yes, we might even have to do an  
overnight walk to visit some canyons.  
When the sport of canyoning is reduced  
to falling out of your car at the first

abseil, we might as well build artificial canyons at Australia's Wonderland. Then we can all have instant gratification without  
leaving the city and return the canyons to their pristine state.

The road closures may put more pressure on the more accessible canyons. If so, the answer probably lies in new  
management of those canyons: hardened access, formalised anchor points and, shudder, party regulation. (Such moves seem  
inevitable anyway.) The answer is not, as canyoning popularity inexorably increases, to make more and more canyons  
accessible, to invite more and more motor vehicles into the bush, and gradually to lose the wildness of the greatest wilder-  
ness in the state.





# ALONG THE TRACK



Alex Tucker  
Tracks & Access Officer

## ACCESS TO BONNUM PIC.

The NPWS District Manager, South Metropolitan, has approved the establishment of a walking route to provide access to Bonnum Pic in Nattai NP without crossing private lands. District staff had worked with members of the Southern Highlands Bushwalkers to define a route wholly within the National Park and to place temporary markers. It seems that other walkers are already using the route but some minor clearing is required to avoid a proliferation of footpads. The track now has to be approved by the local Aboriginal Council. If this approval is given, track work will be done in the autumn and volunteers are requested from clubs who regularly visit this spectacular country. Tentative dates are either 1-2 April or 8-9 April. It may be that all the work can be done on the Saturday

## AUSTRALIAN ALPS WALKING TRACK (AAWT)

The Maintenance Strategy Group (MSG), which is part of the Recreation & Tourism Working Group of the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC) held its annual Planning Meeting at Walhalla Victoria last October. Walhalla is an old gold mining town now reduced to a very small number of residents and is the southern entrance to the AAWT. Most of those present are Rangers in the three National Parks services, but they welcome the comments and opinions of members of user groups., among them John Siseman author of the guide book which first promoted the three State track. Bill Metzenthen represented VicWalk, Stuart Brooks the Victorian Mountain Tramping Club and Melbourne Walking Club and Rupert Barnett the Victorian NPA. Allan Mikkelsen represented the Canberra Bushwalking Club and Alan Vidler also

of that club represented Confederation.

Most of the many issues and "Hot Spots" discussed are in Victoria but a major item was the AAWT route between Charlotte Pass and Guthega Power Station

The official route follows the Kosciuszko and Link Roads to avoid the sensitive Main Range but many walkers, not unnaturally, prefer to go that way. There is a longstanding proposal to reroute the AAWT from the above roads down an old SMHEA survey track along Spencers Creek to the Guthega Road. There was some support for a recommendation to the AALC that a feasibility study be financed. It was unfortunate that the NPWS Jindabyne office was unable to send a representative to the meeting. It is known that that District is unwilling to divert scarce resources to the upgrading any informal tracks. No doubt the MSG executive officer will be seeking to resolve the issue.

Having reached Guthega PS the AAWT follows the Schlink Pass road that is a park management trail and "unpleasant walking"

The Broken Dam hut burnt down some 18 months ago and in line with NPWS policy, will NOT be rebuilt. The AAWT publications will be amended.

## SNOWY RIVER CROSSING

A member of Confederation has passed to me a complaint about the difficulty in crossing the Snowy River on the track from Charlotte Pass to Blue Lake during the September / October school holidays. Due to the early snow melt this year the river level was higher than usual but not at a level at which the warning signs recommend against using the stepping stones. In response to my letter, the Assistant District Manager, Alpine advises that it is necessary to relocate the stones every year because the peak river flow moves them downstream. I have recently seen a photo taken some years ago in which the spacing of the stones appear to be more user friendly for children than at present. Has anyone else had problems with the crossing or do you have a photo which might assist NPWS in improving the location and flatness of the stones. I had thought that artificial

stones, roughly ellipsoidal in cross section might give less restriction to high river flows and not be too visually unattractive. Do club members have any other ideas or comments?

## LOCKLEY TRACK BLUE MOUNTAINS NP.

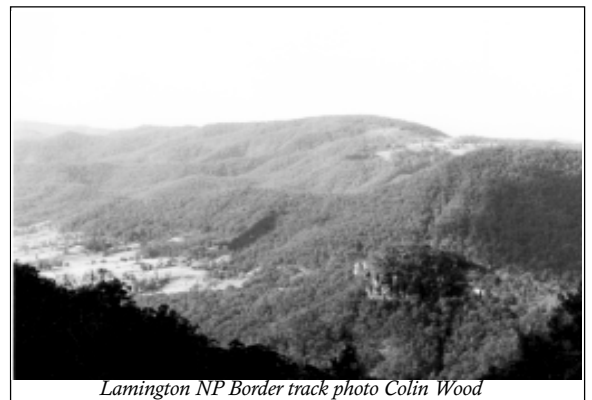
Another Confederation member has reported that a wooden ladder on a steep section of the Lockley Track just beyond the turn off to Lockley Pylon is in very bad repair and it is probably less dangerous to scramble down, although this increases the erosion impact the ladder was meant to avoid. The Acting District Manager Blue Mountains has replied promptly to my letter and has arranged for an inspection. The most disturbing part of the letter is that the District has a major backlog of safety related issues on walking tracks

I ask all club members to report any unsafe conditions that they encounter on their walks in **any NP** to Confederation through their club representatives or to the Confederation Secretary for the attention of the Tracks & Access Officer.

We might then be able to inform the Minister and the NPWS Director General of our concerns.

## LAMINGTON NP

You may have seen the coverage given by the Telegraph Mirror last December to the story of four bushwalkers "lost for four days" while attempting to walk to the site of the



Lamington NP Border track photo Colin Wood

1937 Stinson crash. Bernard O Reilly told of his search for the survivors in his book "Green Mountain" and there has been four feature films made over the years since.

Brian who had led has sent some clippings to me a party with the same intention last May but which also failed

*Continued on page 18*





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## BUSHWALKERS<sup>NSW</sup>

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## "IS THE COFFEE FILTERED?"

Walk Safely - Walk With a Club



Nepal has long been the destination of travellers lured by trekking routes that pass through villages and over high passes with spectacular views of some of the world's highest mountains.

With thermal underwear and torch packed ready for the big adventure, probably the biggest concerns are "will I be fit enough?" or "will I get sick?". But as you set off on the trek, other questions arise such as "is the coffee filtered?" or "are there any chocolates donuts?"



Typical Kitchen in Nepal

Yes, you can get filtered coffee and donuts but only in Kathmandu or the bigger towns such as Pokhara or Namche Bazaar. It is important to understand that Nepal is Nepalese, that's its attraction.

A typical meal in a lodge will have either a rice, noodle or potato base and is usually served with vegetables such as carrots, cauliflower or mustard greens. Meat such as buff (buffalo), goat or chicken is available and served together with the bones - nothing goes to waste. Lunch and dinner menus are interchangeable. Breakfast choices are muesli, porridge, pancakes or eggs.

Good food, high in carbohydrates and a great source of energy but, be prepared because it can get a bit boring on a long trek. After just a few days on the trail, you will understand how almost everything is carried by

either porters or mules, much of it for tourists. Kit-Kat, Pringles and Coca-Cola can be purchased on the trail but if Vegemite is your passion - take your own.

A must try are the mo-mos which are meat or vegetarian filled dumplings and served with a clear soup and chilli sauce. Some tea houses will have treats such as apple pie, always freshly baked just for you. Yak steaks appear on the menu at higher altitudes and are best consumed using a Swiss Army knife and for something with a real kick, try the mustang coffee!

Trekkers often get impatient waiting for their meal to arrive. Cooking facilities are simple and all the food is cooked fresh. If each member of the group orders a different dish, then as each meal is prepared, it will be served then another cooked and served etc. Time and cooking fuel can be saved if people order the same dishes.

So why not enjoy the wait because it will certainly be worth it and relax into the Nepali way of life.

Contributed by Marilynne Sherpa of Om Trek.



**Trekking Temples & Tigers**

**Trek with Australian  
Sherpa team to the  
heart and soul of  
Nepal**

### **Gokyo Lakes and Everest Base Camp, 28 days, \$4,785 inc. airfares ex Melb/Sydney**

A short mountain flight takes you to Phaplu where this trek into the Everest region commences. Visits to Salleri market and Thubten Chhuling monastery will introduce you to the local Sherpas. The trek passes through apple orchards and rhododendron forests to Namche Bazaar for a day's rest and then on to Gokyo Lakes. Weather permitting, we will cross Cho La Pass to climb Kalar Patar; moraines and glaciers surround you. Labouche East peak, 5,119m optional extra.

Staying in tents, day sightseeing in Kathmandu included.

This 22 day trek requires an excellent level of fitness - sustained walking with 10 days at altitudes over 4,000m.

Departs 5th October 2000

### **Annapurna Sanctuary.**

**21 days, \$3,795 inc. airfares ex Melb/Sydney**

This moderate trek passes through some of the most beautiful countryside in the world. Starting out from Pokhara, you will pass through different ethnic communities, rhododendron and magnolia forests, over swing bridges and view sunrises that will take your breath away. Spectacular views of Annapurna South, Hiunchuli and Machhapuchhare will dominate the skyline as you trek to Annapurna Base Camp. Good food will sustain you, clean air will invigorate you.

Staying in lodges, day sightseeing in Kathmandu included.

14 days trekking, moderate fitness as well as a love of walking and the outdoors required.

Departs 2nd November 2000

### **Mingmar & Marilynne Sherpa of Om Trek Pty Ltd**

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Walk Safely - Walk With a Club.....



# A GUIDE TO BIRD HABITATS IN NEW SOUTH WALES R. M. COOPER AND I.A.W. MCALLAN

By Merrilyn Sach - Past member of The NSW  
Field Ornithologists Club

This Guide is to assist its members when in the field recording bird species and related data on a specifically prepared Report Sheet. With this collective data, the Bird Atlassers monitors the distribution of birds in New South Wales, preserving habitats, providing a proper basis for environmental impact studies and for other ornithological reference purposes. The Guide allows the members to be quite precise in recording habitat of the birds sited and is a compact size and weight for use in the field.

But for the casual birdwatcher and lover of Australia's wonderful natural bounties, the Guide provides throughout a colourful and excellent pictorial array of almost 1,000 different habitats in New South Wales together with descriptions of the typical flora to be found, geographical location and of course the common names of the birds which prefer that particular habitat, a preference based on sources of preferred food, shelter and roosting and nesting sites.

With the Guide's use would come a greater awareness of, and appreciation for, Australia's unique natural environment and a wider knowledge of the birdlife which depends on that precious natural world of sea, mountain and desert.

The Introduction is concise and contains a simple yet informative Glossary. The coloured photographs are superb, giving names of flora shown and where photographed. Also included is a Bibliography and a list of botanical and common names of plants mentioned in the text.

Overall a very excellent Guide.

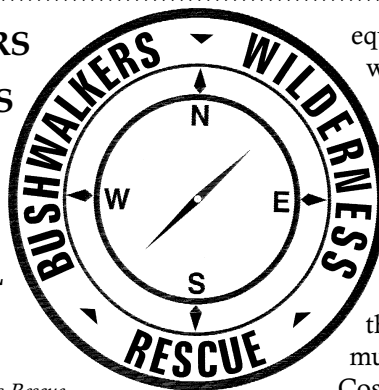
## BUSHWALKERS WILDERNESS RESCUE EXERCISE: 8-9 APRIL 2000.

Glen Horrocks  
Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue

The April Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Exercise is aimed at improving the personal skills of members of bushwalking clubs so they are more proficient and self-reliant bushwalkers. This year we will be returning to Cataract Scout Park as our base and following a similar theme as last year's March exercise. Workshops will be run on navigation, GPS, radio and communications, personal abseiling skills, first aid, problem solving and team work. For those who like to get wet and muddy we will also be doing Challenge Valley obstacle course (optional, you don't have to if you don't want to). This has been a highly successful event in previous years, with all learning new skills in a friendly environment (including the instructors!).

Cataract Scout Park is located on the road to Cataract Dam, off Appin Road, half way between Appin and the F6 Southern Freeway. We will start at 9:00am Saturday morning, and will finish Sunday afternoon.

We will have use of the camp kitchen which has gas burners, running water, sinks and a refrigerator; and a small hall if the weather turns nasty. The camping will be close to the cars. You will need your own camping



equipment, the gear you would take on a normal day walk including a first aid kit, map and compass, and your personal abseiling equipment. For those who want to do Challenge Valley bring an old set of clothes that you can get wet and muddy.

Costs have not been confirmed

yet, but it will cost approximately \$5 per night for camping per night per person, and around \$4 per person to do Challenge Valley.

It should be an educational and enjoyable weekend. Come along and learn some new skills, learn about rescue, and socialise with club members from far and wide.

For more information on this and other Wilderness Rescue activities, see our web page:

<http://www.mcauley.nsw.edu.au/rescue/>

## HEAVY METAL "GARBAGE"

The world is now overflowing with cheap mirrors - compact disks (CDs) of all kinds of music from head banger "Garbage" (it really is a group) to "both kinds" Country and Western (to quote the 'Blues Brothers'). Now mirrors are good things to signal aircraft and helicopters but need to be aimed to be effective.

The problem is of course that aircraft always seem so obvious. They are only obvious because they are moving. When you Freeze their motion in a picture all you get is a dirty speck. I

## A GUIDE TO THE BIRD HABITATS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The New South Wales Bird Atlassers (NSWBA) are proud to announce the launch of their latest publication - A GUIDE TO THE BIRD HABITATS IN NEW SOUTH WALES - possibly the first attempt to link the distribution of bird species with their preferred habitat. This publication contains more than 200 photographs of the varying types of vegetation in NSW, from oceanic islands to rainforests, alpine herbfield, woodlands, grasslands, the largest riverine wetland system in Australia, and the near-desert environment of the far west of this state.

Given such a diversity of habitats it is unreasonable to expect the average bird-watcher to be able to identify specific vegetation for the more than 500 species of birds accepted as occurring in NSW.

Hence this GUIDE TO THE BIRD HABITATS in NSW, describing the differing types of vegetation, and providing a list of some of the more common birds one may expect to find there. More information and orders may be obtained by contacting the publicity officer of the NSW Bird Atlassers.

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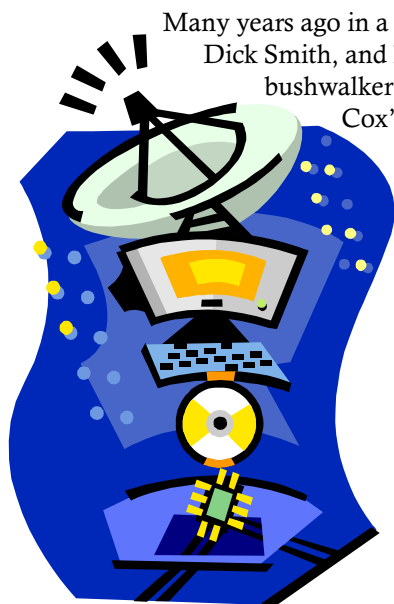
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have an excellent panoramic slide of Mt Cook taken while climbing Copeland Saddle. The great weather produced a clear picture spoilt only by a dirty speck. If the plane is a speck how much smaller must I have been?

Helicopters and light aircraft are always used first in fine weather to search for missing persons. They can be quick and cost effective from their ability to travel quickly to the search area and communicate via radio to ground search teams. With trained observers they are often successful but when there is tree cover their success rate is often quite low.



Many years ago in a training exercise with Dick Smith, and his first helicopter, bushwalkers standing still in the Cox's River were not seen! In September, 1999 in Cedar Creek, under Narrow Neck, the search helicopter was so close the missing bushwalker reported that he could stongly smell its exhaust fumes but still was NOT seen!

Prompt identification will lead to early rescue. There are a number of

ways to attract attention. You obviously need to be in an open an area as possible and use combinations of contrasting colour, shape & movement. The unusual often draws the eye to it. For example, in a sea of green eucalypts blue (or red)

stands out. It is even more compelling when the blue is of a rectangular groudsheet pegged down. Alternatively you could furiously wave your blue parka in all directions. Others jumping up and down with you is better again. Just pick an unusual combination of contrasting colour, shape & movement. On hazy days smokey fires are almost invisible and always difficult to maintain for that brief moment when the aircraft suddenly appears. To really catch attention, though, why not send a mirror signal, i.e. a flash of light into the aircraft.

But, how do you aim the mirror fflash to hit the moving dirty speck (aircraft)? The hole in the CD makes it easy. Hold the CD (with the reflective side facing out) close to one eye and look at the aircraft through the hole. Now hold an arm out with a finger extended and track the aircraft across the sky. If you now catch the sun to flash onto your finger you must also hit the aircraft!

What if you don't want to be noticed. In snow capped mountains (such as New Zealand) on a clear day climbers readily stand out as moving coloured specks on a vast white background. The convention is if a climber has an accident they wave vigorously at any plane flying overhead. The pilot will immediately radio to Emergency Senices for a rescue. If they have only slipped and bruised nothing but the ego they deliberately pay no attention to overhead aircraft which may now circle waiting for a signal. Alternatively you could be walking in one of the popular parts of the Blue Mountains and a possible search aircraft flies low overhead. If your trip is proceeding well you should stand still under tree cover if possible until the aircraft passes. Pilots seeing groups not in difficulties can potentially delay the location of the group who really need their help.

Other sources of CDs are trial computer programs

## ABSEILING AT MOUNT PORTAL

*Article & photos by Keith Maxwell  
Director Wilderness Rescue*

Mount Portal is a lookout at the edge of the Lapstone Monocline. It thus has a knockout view down the Nepean River and over the Cumberland Plain from its location above the junction of Glenbrook Creek (Gorge) and Nepean River.



At Mount Portal there is a gently sloping gully, that is easy to ascend, that has long been popular for beginner abseilers. Other abseils of higher grades are also nearby including a steep wall on the west side of "Abseiler's Gully". As a drive to site, just outside Glenbrook, it gets heavily used by a broad range of beginner abseilers from locals to Bushwalking Clubs / Scouts to

commercial groups. Equally many visitors just come to see the panoramic view of the western plains of Sydney.

Recently the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NP&WS) did extensive capital works to improve visitor safety and accessibility. Included were measures to regulate abseiling. You pass the turnoff to Tunnel View Lookout on the way to Mount Portal. This side road is now gated here so that you have to walk a short distance to see the railway tunnel that cuts through a bend in Glenbrook Gorge. There is a local area information board and multilingual warning sign about going close to cliff edges.

The one way 'eye' that you previously drove around at Mount Portal is blocked off on the approach side. You now drive in and out the same way to a new, large, open, gravel carpark. The far end and cliff side of the carpark are bounded by pool fencing. The pool

fencing continues around a viewing platform, suitable for wheelchair access, that leads off the far end of the carpark. This platform runs on the west side of "Abseiler's Gully". At its end is a labelled picture sign to help visitors identity the many features visible from this great lookout.

Half of a large information sign is devoted to local area information while the other half lists safety principles for abseilers to follow. Consideration of others is requested while the rock bolts are the only anchors to be used. The tree at the head of "Abseiler's Gully" is gone! Access from the carpark is by a set of (lockable) double pool gates that open inwards. A bold sign says "ABSEILERS ONLY beyond this point".

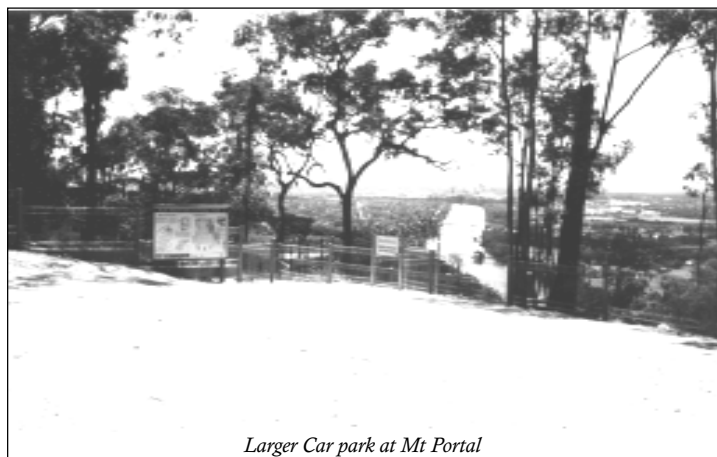
In place of the tree now are four large stainless steel bolts (as specified by NP&WS on advice from a consultant engineer). These are 16mm diameter with a head that is 27mm across. They protrude out of the rock between 20 to 40mm and are set back from the gully edge by 2.5metres. They thus are too







large for standard 'bolt plates'. Many people have chosen, unwisely, to put prussic slings onto these bolts for their abseil ropes. A short section of pool fence behind these bolts limits access to



Larger Car park at Mt Portal

one direction only. People ascending the gully are forced to walk around behind the fence. Scattered on either side of the gully are "standard" size bolts (which would suit normal bolt plates) for the more difficult abseils.

#### COMMENTS

It is clear that NP&WS have accepted the impossibility of stopping abseiling. They have tried to limit their public liability by extensive fencing and excessively strong bolts as anchors. Obviously oversize bolt plates would be the best way to anchor abseiling ropes. Bolt plates all used to be home made but *bushwalkers should now carefully consider* the public liability implications of the failure of a home made bolt plate before attempting their construction. Why not generate some bushwalker consumer pressure by asking at your local bushwalking shop for the "Portal" bolt plate.

#### SLINGS

Despite the difficulties of attaching to these bolts, under NO circumstances should the fencing be used. Slings of adequate strength to wrap around the bolts could be either properly tied ones of 25mm tube tape or 14mm 'Spectra'. Spectra slings come as a ready made loop joined by sewing. Tube tape is cheaper but you must be sure your tape knot lies "flat" and is

pulled tight with good long tails. Your club Training Officer should be able to assist you. Last year a bushwalker abseiler was nearly killed when an incorrectly tied tape knot, on the belay sling, came undone!

#### INSTRUCION & INSURANCE

Some people do abseiling as a "sport". Unfortunately most accidents happen at fixed locations such as where 'abseiling training days' or sport abseiling are held. The Confederation is negotiating with our insurer guidelines for the required skills of club abseiling Instructors. Until these are approved there is NO insurance cover for abseiling Instructors. All future training days should be under the control of a recognised club abseiling Instructor who meets the skills criteria.

#### RIGGING

"Abseiler's Gully" is a particularly low level of risk (as abseils go) but the same principles should be applied as for

any fixed location for multiple abseils. The (bolt) slings should **not** be able to accidentally flip off the bolts if for any reason the load is suddenly reduced. Do not do big jumps and leaps as these can apply large forces to your rigging and accelerate any rope abrasion that has already started. Continuous abseiling at the one spot accentuates any minor faults in rigging. At regular intervals during the day the abseil rigging should be checked. Commonly everyone carefully watches the Instructor do the rigging then happily abseil all day with no further checks! The last abseil of the day has become someone's last abseil! All abseilers should be checked by a 'buddy' before starting their descent.

#### ROPE ABRASION

Rope abrasion can be a serious problem whenever ropes are anchored so far back from the cliff edge (2.5 metres at Abseiler's Gully). For safety and to extend the life of your rope you should use some form of rope protection where the rope makes sharp turns over rocks. While Sydney sandstone is friable it still is composed of very hard grains of quartz! Abseiling all day at the same location will concentrate rope abrasion at the sharp turns over rocks. An old hessian sack tied in place by a short rope is a popular choice.

The great principle of plumbing is 'water does not flow uphill'. For abseilers the great principle must be 'gravity never takes a holiday'. Safety must be a priority. Thus the above comments must be integrated within your other knowledge of safe abseiling. Abseiling is not an essential skill for bushwalking but can open up access to some very special places in the Greater Blue Mountains and elsewhere.

## WHAT'S IN THE VAULTS? - RECONSTRUCTING A

### PICTURE OF PAST ENVIRONMENTS

Here are some snippets from a 1930s bushwalking guide book:

'Head first for the highest dune you can see...from the top of this you can look down on the far side on fully grown trees which are slowly being buried by this moving sand dune....Turning west, you will see before you amongst the sandhills a valley floored with shells and dotted with the stumps and spreading roots of many trees. Your way now leads you along this very interesting valley, which is part of the Quibray Aboriginal Middens.

*Here, for many years, the aboriginals camped and made their tools, and this for many years after the white man had taken their land, as is proved by certain small tools which have been found, made of bottle glass instead of stone.....(SBW 1932).*

If you hadn't guessed, this is describing part of the Kurnell

John Macris  
Conservation Officer

Peninsula B.C. (before Caltex). Having already been subject to over a century of grazing by that stage, leading to mobilisation of the once wooded dunes, the area was already a degraded landscape, as the text goes on to suggest. The snapshot of the tall sandhill environment and array of cultural artifacts is quite fascinating however, when compared with the rather scarred residual landscape remaining today after the establishment of heavy industry and extraction of over 50 million tonnes of sand.

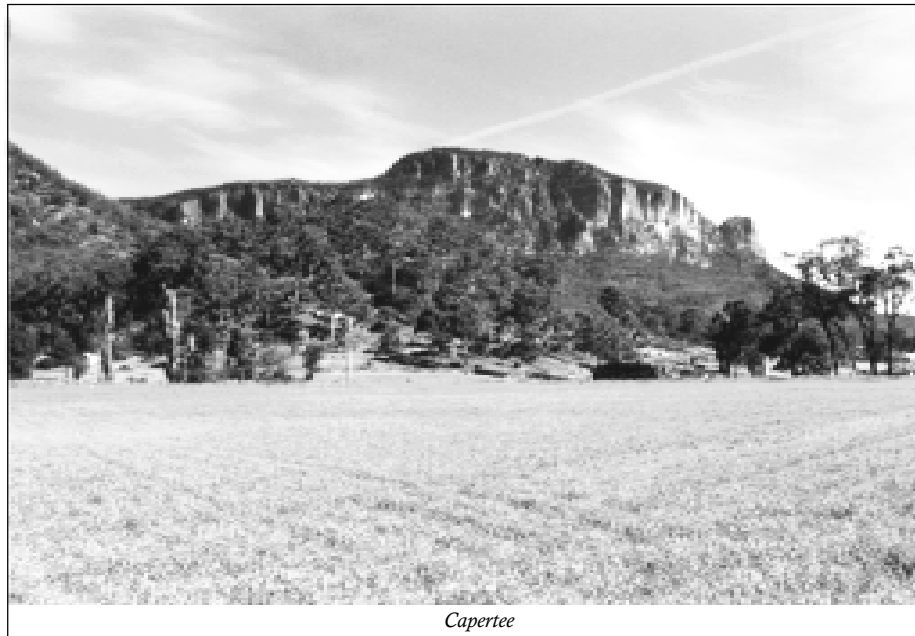
Travelling through an area on foot seems to lend itself to taking note of the features on show. For the purpose of tracing environmental change, notes by early bushwalkers and naturalists are often an excellent source of information. For example, changes in the bird species observed in a rural area over time can be used as an indicator of the

pace of habitat modification.

For some areas, historic travel notes giving an original intact description of territories long since disturbed, represent one of the few means of determining what grew there prior to settlement.

I have recently investigated accounts of the pre-disturbance environment in the lower Hunter Valley during early colonial settlement, in particular the

The journal of the agronomist Peter Cunningham from 1827 gives an account of the variety of natural vegetation encountered in travels along the Hunter Valley during the infancy of its settlement. Cunningham supports the above evidence of rainforest occurring on the Hunter floodplain. He further describes the foothills in the vicinity of Wallis Plains (Maitland): "*The country*



Capertee

floodplain environment which was entirely cleared for agriculture. For this it was necessary to consult references to early exploration and 'taming' by the new settlers.

The alluvial flats in the area around Maitland and the Hunter-Paterson Rivers junction were named Wallis and Paterson Plains respectively (Vader 1987). It appears from recounts of exploration by William Paterson in 1801 that much of the floodplain environment of the area supported stands of Red Cedar - a rainforest species used extensively for its valuable timber

A more explicit description of the forest type in which the cedar occurred is recorded by the area's Bishop Tyrell, regarding the 'Greenhills' property established in the 1820s at the junction of the Hunter and Paterson Rivers, as follows: "*Mr Close found the country a dense bush, covered with scrub and ancient trees, whose arched branches almost concealed the river, and whose leafy boughs were so impervious to light that to walk beneath them, even in broad daylight, was like walking in the dimness of twilight*" (re-printed in Vader 1987 p31). This quote is clearly depicting a rainforest environment on the Hunter floodplain. The full passage goes on to describe the clearance of this vegetation for agriculture.

*back from the river consists of rising hills of inferior soil, with fertile flooded vine brushes, watered by lagoons communicating with the river*". The valley environment upstream of the present day Maitland towards Singleton is described by Cunningham as initially rainforest followed by predominantly open forest, before the extensive grassland and Savannah plains around Singleton were encountered.

Subsequent vegetation and land system mapping of the Hunter in the 1960s at the broad catchment scale, appears not to have taken great account of the pre-settlement floodplain environments. In fact the valley is depicted in a number of published regional outlines, as merging from open Savannah woodland to dry open forest, oblivious to the past enclave of moist forests cleared from the Maitland vicinity.

One interesting implication of this reconstruction is that an ecological link possibly existed prior to European settlement, between the forest environments of the Watagan mountains/central coast hinterland in the south and Barrington Tops (thence adjoining the extensive northern forested escarpment) in the north, albeit with gradational patterns of dry and moist open forest and a variety of understory forms. The present day open valley in contrast

forms a major divide to the natural areas of the eastern escarpment and their wildlife.

Returning to the matter of examining walk notes by bushwalkers of yesteryear, a current area of interest to geomorphologists is the changing patterns of sedimentation in our rivers. A stream like the Colo for example, today shows the effects of human activity in its major tributaries the Wolgan and Capertee Rivers. These rivers flow across fairly broad alluvial valley floors prior to entering the more constricted and steeply falling gorge sections in Wollemi National Park. Clearance of native vegetation in the upper reaches has released significant quantities of sediment into the river. With clay particles largely carried out to the Hawkesbury suspended in flood waters, the remaining sandy sediments, less easily transported, have accumulated throughout the length of the Lower Wolgan, Capertee and Colo.

It is said that in the first decade or so of bushwalking in the Colo country, quantities of sand encountered in the gorge sections were much lower than these days. If this anecdotal information can be fleshed out with any written accounts from the first walkers, of the river condition at certain locations, this potentially offers reference points for those studying the rates at which this catchment is divesting itself of the eroded alluvial sands.

If we know that, we have an idea of how long it might take (after arresting erosion in the headwaters) for these streams to return to their former characteristic rocky condition.

So if you happen upon any such information, please get in touch.

References or recommended reading:

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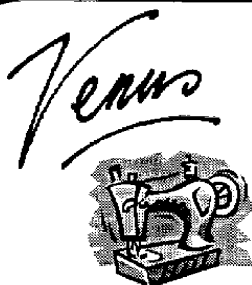
<b>March</b>	5th Metrogaine Homebush	18-19th ACT Rogaine Championships	Great Grose Gorse walk 11-19th contact Kath Ireland Blackheath NPWS	21st Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30
<b>April</b>	8-9th BWR* Rescue Training	15-16th NSW Rogaine Championships Colo	18th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30	30th ACT Paddy Pallin Rogaine
<b>May</b>	16th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30	27-28th Senior First-aid Training Confederation		
<b>June</b>	18th Paddy Pallin Rogaine Capertree date	20th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30		
<b>July</b>	1-2nd BWR* NavShield	15-16th Aust Championships Rogaine Scone	18th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30	
<b>August</b>	15th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30	20th Confederation AGM venue TBA		
<b>September</b>	10th ACT Cyclegaine 6hr	19th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30		
<b>October</b>	7th Lake Macquarie Rogaine Friday 13th Confederation Bushdance	17th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30	21-22 BWR* Rescue training	28-29 Senior First-aid training Confederation
<b>November</b>	11 ACT 6&12 hr Rogaine	21st Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30	25-26th Upside down Rogaine	
<b>December</b>	19th Confederation meeting Ashfield RSL 7-30			

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# THE COLO WILDERNESS BY ANTHONY DUNK

*Reviewed by Wilf Hilder*

Published by Envirobook Sydney  
1999

Max Gentle's terse but immortal description of the Colo River - that it was good for all round physical development - is a masterpiece of understatement.

Anthony Dunk's new book on the Colo Wilderness and Wollemi National Park is a most useful guide book in the excellent series produced by Envirobook.

The author's extensive research on the ground as well as on paper, has resulted in a very "user friendly" guide book for a region that is noted for its

*from page 8*

to reach the site. It appears that the newspaper had described the six walkers, all in their mid 20s to 30s as "heroes" which seems unkind to the three ladies. The status seems to be denied by the party and by the farming couple that met the party walking out. The National Park's District Manager is quoted by the paper as saying that the party had met the self reliance and experience criteria necessary for walking in the area. The report mentions that they still had enough food for an other day when found which may have been seven days since the start of a weekend walk. On the other hand they may not have advised their relatives of this before leaving..

When they realised that they were lost they stayed put for the first night and lit signal fires but the tree canopy was too thick and the four searching helicopters failed to spot it. There is no mention of any further signal fires so presumably the searchers moved on to other locations. The paper mentions the usual false leads such as a "space blanket belonging to the party" found at Grady's Creek. So the story is confusing to say the least.

It is further confused by the experience of Brian's party, which had attempted to reach the Stinson site, by the Stretcher Track cut to bring out the crash survivors.

The Manager of the Stinson Park Caravan Park had advised them to avoid the alternative Christmas Creek Track and probably gave the same advice to the December party. His

tough and tricky terrain and poor topo maps.

The twenty walks detailed in the book are graded for experienced walkers and there is a good range of walks for all the major access points around Wollemi NP. The walk descriptions and how to get to the starting points is thorough, but useful information on the Colo Gorge is scarce. The outline maps provided for most walks are good but will test your navigational ability. Another section in the book covers vehicle camping areas mainly on the edges of Wollemi NP. The book is well illustrated, but some photos are not up to the quality of the text.

I am pleased to recommend Anthony Dunk's "The COLO Wilderness as a very ?? book for any serious bushwalker interested in Wollemi NP especially the mighty Colo Gorge.

advice may have been outdated.

Another complication is that at the January meeting of Confederation a member claimed to have had no problems in reaching this crash site. There was no time to get details. **So lets hear some detailed information from any one else with recent experience**

The other reported comment from the NP District Manager was that the area had been deliberately left as unsigned wilderness. Generally Confederation would support this action, but it seems that it might not be appropriate in this instance for a "heritage walk". A popular Alpine wilderness area in Victoria has found that "fanning out" has resulted in a proliferation of tracks and the manager has decided to sparingly sign post one track. At Lamington it seems that walkers have fixed yellow plastic tapes and some of the problems of the December party may have been a sudden absence of the tapes due to weather or removal by advocates of strict wilderness conditions. The rescue operation involved some 60 SES volunteers and NP staff, and the helicopters so financial considerations alone would indicate a need for minimal signposting of one of the two tracks and/or minimal clearing of fallen trees and encroaching vegetation. The alternative management option is to formally close all access tracks with wide publicity that there is no management of public risk..

I will be writing to the Queensland Federation for their advice on whether we should take any official actions.

## CAPERTEE

We've fallen in love with Capertee,  
The sunken valley of Capertee;  
With its twisted gums,  
And its rolling downs;  
With its grazing sheep,  
And its lack of towns;

We've fallen in love with Capertee,  
The sunken valley of Capertee.  
We're deeply in love with Capertee,  
This shining valley of Capertee;  
With its guarding cliffs,  
And its knobbly peaks;  
With its stately buttes  
And its tree-lined creeks;  
We're deeply in love with Capertee,  
This shining valley of Capertee.

We'd like to live in Capertee,  
The sunken valley of Capertee;  
With its sheep and cows,  
And its kangaroos;  
With its greens and browns,  
And its hazy blues;  
We'd like to live in Capertee,  
The sunken valley of Capertee.

We want to explore fair Capertee,  
The wide-spread valley of Capertee;  
We'll follow the tracks  
Where the magpies flute;  
We'll try to climb  
Each towering butte;  
We want to explore fair Capertee,  
The wide-spread valley of Capertee.

We'll dream through the years of  
Capertee,  
The sunken valley of Capertee;  
With its mountain air,  
And its rolling downs;  
With its lovely hills;  
And its lack of towns;  
We'll dream through the years of  
Capertee,  
The sunken valley of Capertee.

Dorothy Lawry  
March 31, 1929  
From Sing With the Wind  
(100 bushwaker poems)





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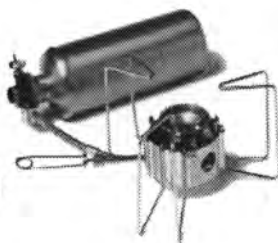
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