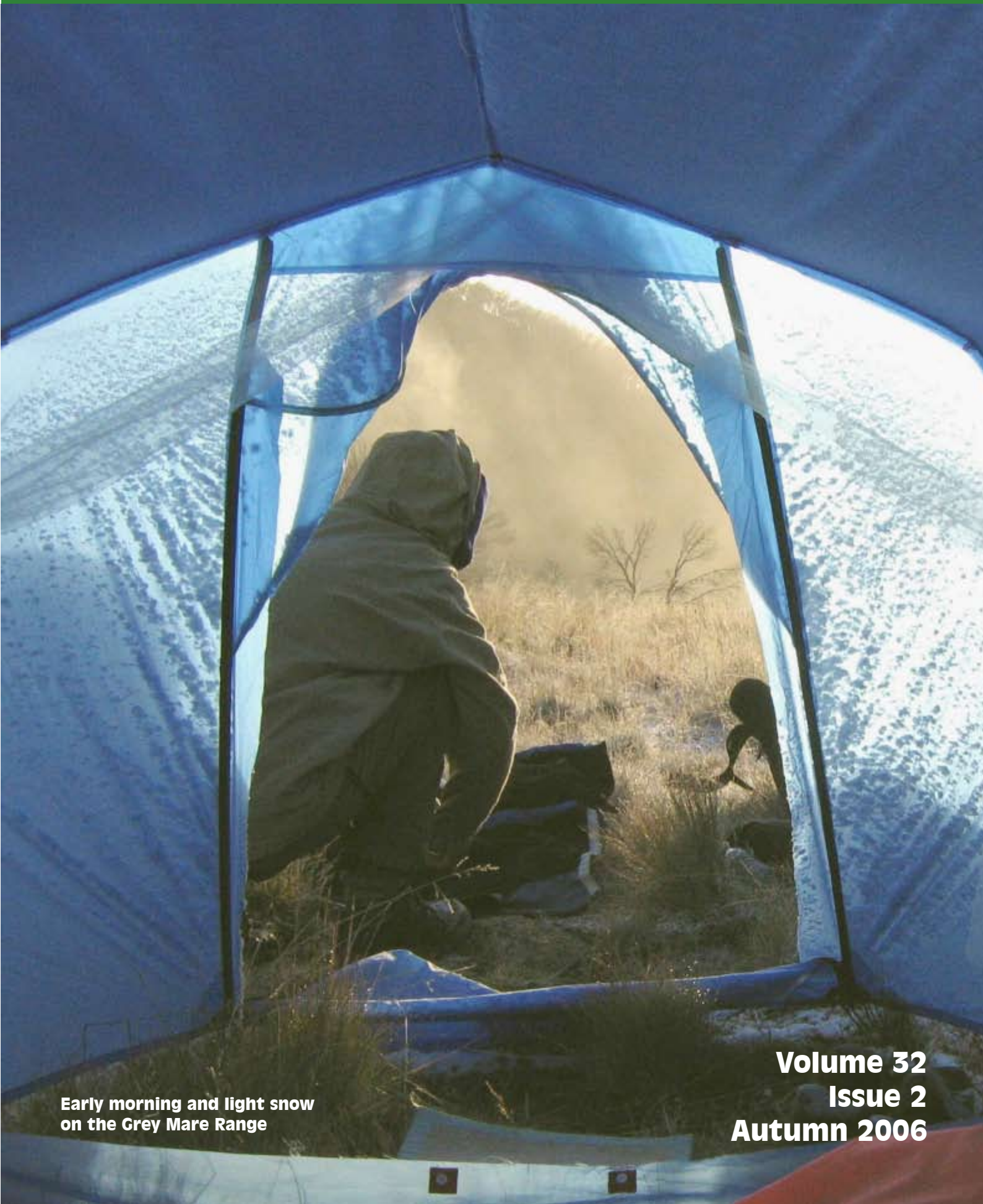


The **Bushwalker**



Early morning and light snow
on the Grey Mare Range

Volume 32
Issue 2
Autumn 2006

The Bushwalker 'Where Am I'

Competition



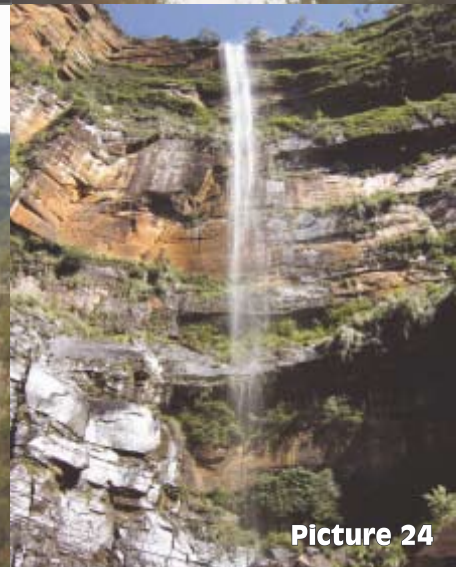
Picture 21



Picture 23



Picture 22



Picture 24

- Each Issue has four photos taken somewhere in NSW in places where bushwalkers go. These will NOT be obscure places.
- You have to identify the place and roughly where the photographer was standing for any ONE of the pictures. (You do not have to identify all four.)
- Send your answers (up to four per issue) to the:
editor@bushwalking.org.au
as quickly as possible.
- Usually, only one prize per person will be awarded from each issue of The Bushwalker. You can score in successive issues.

Deadline for entries

The Editor may start allocating prizes as and when qualifying entries arrive. The competition remains open if there are no correct entries for a photo. If several really correct entries for a photo arrive together, one will be picked out of a hat. So get your entries in as fast as

possible! You can also see these pictures on the Confederation web site, along with descriptions and winners.

Entry requirements

Just saying something like 'Blue Gum Forest' would not be enough. However, something like 'Blue Gum Forest from the start of the descent down DuFours Buttress' would qualify. In short, provide enough information that someone else could navigate to that spot and take a close approximation to the photo. Of course, if you want to give a map name and grid reference, that would be fine too.

The prizes?

Three companies well-known to us all have donated cash vouchers redeemable in their stores. The Paddy Pallin group has donated two \$50 vouchers per issue, Mountain Equipment has donated one \$100 voucher and their allied store

Trek & Travel has donated one \$100 voucher per issue.

Any financial member of an affiliated Bushwalking Club can enter. We may check with your Club membership secretary, so make sure you are financial, so you must include the name of your club with your entry. The Editor's decision is final. After all, he took the photos. This does mean that some areas of NSW may not appear in the competition for a while. My apologies to Clubs in those areas.

Results from last issue

There were many correct entries for the last issue. The winners are:

Photo 17: Benowie Trail, bridge over Calna Ck, identified by Paul Ellis of Shoalhaven Bushwalkers

Photo 18: Grand Canyon, upper section, identified by Neville Osborne of NPA & CMW

Photo 19: Dunphy Carpark, Green Gully, identified by Len Sharp of All Nations Bushwalkers

Photo 20: Blue Lake in snow, identified by Andrew Sillar of Berowra Bushwalkers Club

Photo 6 from long ago still remains open.

The Bushwalker

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The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc represents approximately 65 Clubs with a total membership of about 10,000 bushwalkers. Formed in 1932, the Confederation provides a united voice on behalf of all bushwalkers on conservation, access and other issues. It runs training courses for members, helps to provide a free wilderness search and rescue organisation, and helps runs bush navigation competitions. People interested in joining a bushwalking club may write to the Confederation Administration (below) for a list of Clubs, but a more up-to-date version can be found on the Confederation website at www.bushwalking.org.au, broken up into areas.



Subscribe to The Bushwalker

Keep up with all the news and developments happening in the NSW bushwalking scene for only \$10 per year. This is to cover posting and handling: the magazine itself is free.

Send your name and address and cheque or money order to Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW, PO Box 2090, GPO Sydney 2001. Make the cheque or money order payable to the Confederation as well.

Also please indicate if you are a member of a bushwalking club, and if not whether you would like a copy of the list of our clubs.

You do have to be a member of one of our clubs to enter the 'Where Am I' Competition.

From the editor's desk. . .

We trust you enjoy our new version of The Bushwalker, the magazine of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW. We are now into our second year of colour.

We still need someone to help us with the advertising and marketing, both for this magazine and the nascent 'Bush Pages' on the web site. This magazine is expensive to produce and the colour advertisements help cover the costs. The web site also costs the Confederation money, and we have decided to have a commercial area under the heading 'Bush Pages' which can carry relevant paid advertisements. But we need an experienced marketing person to drive both of these areas. No pay, but plenty of glory! Enquiries please to admin@bushwalking.org.au.

We can't produce this magazine without something to print. Clubs and members are encouraged to submit relevant articles, with a strong preference for those with good pictures. We will also accept articles from outside bodies where the articles seem relevant to members. Articles may be edited for length and content to help fit into our page limit. Pictures should be sent at maximum resolution: 300 dpi JPG, PDF or TIFF preferred. Please send them separate from the text file, rather than embedded in a Word doc. Really long articles may not fit however - sorry about that. And, of course, the Editor is always interested in receiving bushwalking books and maps for review. Enquiries should be sent to editor@bushwalking.org.au.

The last issue of the Photo Competition attracted a lot of entries - I shall have to make the pictures more difficult! Many correct entries were received for each picture, so I selected the winners from those who had not won previously. But keep trying!

Please note that opinions expressed by authors may not represent the official opinions of the Confederation or any Club. The Editor's opinions don't represent anyone at all.

Roger Caffin
Editor

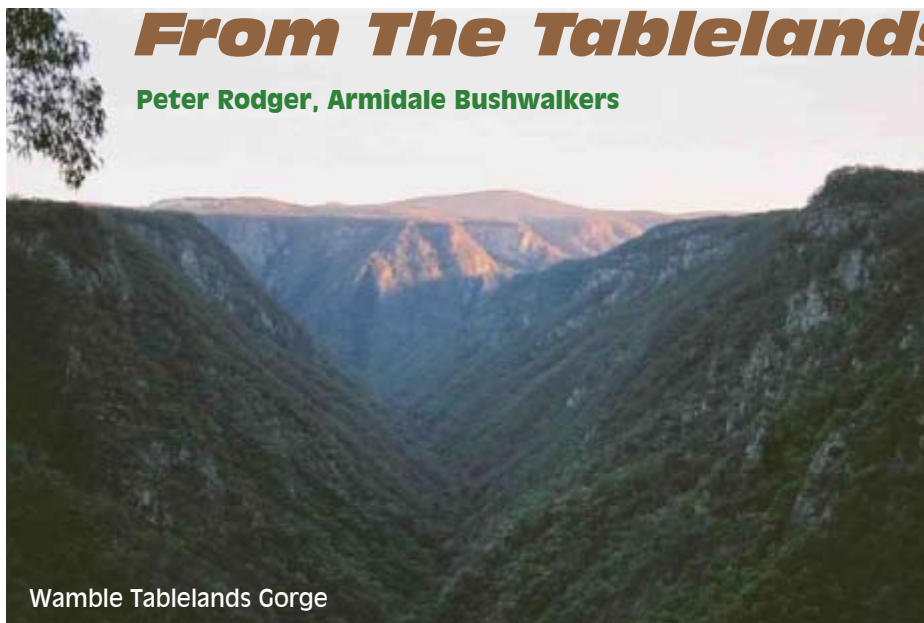


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From The Tablelands To The Sea

Peter Rodger, Armidale Bushwalkers



Wamble Tablelands Gorge

Three Armidale Bushwalking Club members recently completed a 530 km walk from Walcha on the New England Tableland to the coast at Coffs Harbour in 26 days. David Lawrence, Paul McCann and Peter Rodger undertook the walk as both a personal challenge and as a means of highlighting some of the natural attributes of the New England/ North Coast areas. On several sections they were joined by other members of our club.

The walk was planned under the auspices of the New England Eco-Tourism Society, which has as a project the establishment of long distance walking track along the route taken, with opportunities for accommodation at several points, with landholders offering host farm facilities.

Our journey began in early Spring at Apsley Falls in lingering wintry weather. This continued with a mix of temperature variations until we reached the Bellinger River valley several weeks later. From our starting point the gorge rim of the Apsley River was followed, and included the various subsidiary side gorges until we reached one of the long ridges which would be our first descent from the highlands into the valley of Blue Mountain Greek, a major tributary in the Macleay River system. Several days of river walking would follow until we again regained the tablelands at Danger's Falls near Armidale. From here we would again follow gorge rims through National Park areas and sometimes private property for which prior permission had been obtained, until again descending to the river valleys via the long ridge dividing the Chandler and Oaky Rivers. We ascended to the tablelands again by walking up the Styx River to what proved to be a suitable access point to take us out on to the Kempsey Road and the Forestry HQ. Our way then led to what would be the highest point on our walk - in the New England National Park near Point Lookout (1560 metres).

The descent into Sunday Greek and the Bellinger River valley is one of the longest in Australia. A day and a half down-

stream would bring us to our last significant climb up to the Dorrigo plateau. Once gained we made our way across the plateau to the Syndicate Track, a steepish descent to the coastal plains. A series of used and disused forestry tracks led us to the beach at Mylstrom, with thereafter one and a half days of pleasant beach walking (sometimes in rain) to our destination at Mutton Bird Island in Coffs Harbour. Waiting for us were City Council officials and champagne, as part of a civic and media welcome.

Altogether it was a great experience over a wide range of country in terms of landform, vegetation and climate. We had started in typically cold tablelands weather with sleet and flurries of snow at one point, and finished in typically warm coastal conditions. Statistically, we had walked for 26 days and covered 530 km.

The logistics of the trip

The entire journey was completed on foot except for the section from Dangars Falls to Armidale then to Gara Gorge, which was done by bicycle. Prior arrangements had been made for storage and collection of the bicycles. The purpose in cycling this section was to avoid long road walks in and out of Armidale. Otherwise the walk sections were continuous with rest and reprovisioning days scheduled to link up with club members who joined us for some stages of the walk and who also provided transport back to Armidale to pick up supplies. This arrangement served us well for the early and middle stages of the walk whilst in the latter stages we were able to resupply when near to civilization.

Suitable locations for pick-up of food plants for future use were:

1. Apsley Falls. Commencement point with full complement – 5 days supply
2. Budd's Mare – East of Walcha, accessible by Moona Plains Rd – 6 days supply

3. Dangar's Falls – South East of Armidale, accessible by Dangersleigh Rd – 4 days supply
4. Wollomombi Falls – Approx 40 kms east of Armidale (note there is a general store in the village 2 km of the main road which stocks basic food items) 2 days supply
5. Point Lookout – In New England NP – 3 days supply
6. Old Forestry HQ, Kempsey Rd (near corner of Styx Forest Way) – 2 days supply.
7. Dorrigo - Small town on the Dorrigo plateau with ample supply points, 2 supermarkets etc – 2 days supply
8. Mylestone Beach – North of Urunga with general store and basic services – 2 days supply

The number of days supplies given are approximate only and would vary according to the needs of a particular party.

If any reader would like further details, information is available from Charlie Winter, Tourism Officer, Walcha Council, phone 02 6774 2460 or council@walchansw.gov.au and www.walchansw.com.au. Postal address: Box 2 PO Walcha NSW 2354.

Will the notion of a continuous walking track following our general route ever be realised? The future alone will tell, but with vision and determination it could. In fact, the Ecotourism Society is already writing brochures for a number of tracks in the area, and has a borrowed the name applied to the Armidale-Coast road. We should soon see the emergence of the Waterfall Way Walking Track Network, and maybe in time we might see a formed track from the Tablelands to the Sea.

(Colin Wood of Armidale Bushwalkers provided this article, and says they call it the WAMBLE walk: Walcha-Armidale-Mutton Bird Little Excursion.)



Salisbury River

ORC resurrects - a Warning

Rod Costigan, Victoria

When I first heard the term “one-size-fits-all”, it was in relation to dressing gown. I knew immediately what it meant: Marketing blurb for, one size fits a chosen few and the rest of us have to make do. Doesn't matter with a dressing gown of course.

This is a tale of one-size-fits-all that matters.

Around Christmas 2003, I was shown a document that was about to be published by a group called the Outdoor Recreation Centre of Victoria. It carried the endorsements (many unauthorised as it turned out) of the Victorian government, several government departments, Scouts, Guides, Duke of Edinburgh, Police, several tour operators and two community groups of which I was a member. In fact I was a committee member of one, the Victorian equivalent of your Wilderness Rescue Squad. We certainly hadn't endorsed this document and it was horrified member who had passed it round.

The content of this Adventure Activity Standards – Bushwalking was risible, but fraught with many dangers for the bushwalking community. On enquiry we were told that this was a final draft and only editorial comment would be considered. This thing was about to be published.

In this document, I read that bushwalking is responsible only when we prepare an extensive risk management plan, only when we carry a pile of safety equipment some of which didn't even exist twenty years ago, only when we travel in parties of four or more with a certificated leader who has been there before, under the leadership of someone who has been there before, under the leadership of someone...

But what has this to do with you in NSW? In late 2004, a committee of state sport departments decided that the AAS would go national, state by state. It is well underway in Tas and SA and has been initiated in WA and Queensland. In 2006, that leaves?

Two years after I received that first email, there is too much story to tell here. But I give you a few key milestones.

Our parent organisation and your Victorian counterpart, VicWalk, called a meeting of club reps and the ORC. I attended as an observer. The mood was angry from start to finish, but the ORC managed to persuade the meeting that the project in its current form had personal support from the Minister of Sport and there was nothing VicWalk could do to stop it. A resolution was passed to the effect that VicWalk would work with the ORC in the hope of achieving a workable compromise. The ORC has misrepresented that as unconditional support ever since, to the Minister and to departments interstate.

I participated in the sub-committee that tried to achieve this outcome. We came within a whisker of achieving something bearable that clearly separated standards applicable to amateurs from those applicable to commercial operators. But it broke

down at the last moment. That was a surprise because what was in it for the ORC was to get the credibility of VicWalk's endorsement.

Meanwhile, pre-empting a better outcome, VicWalk sought legal advice from a QC and was told that if it published an endorsement even of an apparently satisfactory document, it would expose its members to increased risk of litigation. Presumably that principle applies to any form of published approval.

With VicWalk out of the picture, fourteen of us formed Adventure Victoria to carry on and such public awareness as there is of this issue probably arises from our research and our efforts to pass the word.

But we really got into this too late. Bushwalking was one of the last activities codified by the project, so it was entrenched in other activities already, regardless of any dissent that that exists there. And the managing department, Sport and Recreation, had already been crowing their success to their equivalents interstate. The conference of sport departments had already decided to roll out the project in their respective states and formalised the decision about the time Adventure Victoria was forming.

Although the ORC refused to receive or consider any submission from Adventure Victoria on the grounds that they had run out of funding, ASS – Bushwalking stayed in play for another fourteen months. They were happy to negotiate with anyone who would trade an endorsement and wouldn't insist on non-commercials and commercials being unbundled. We wouldn't do either.

It is probably fair to note that your counterparts, VicWalk, have subsequently fostered a strategic alliance with the ORC and are generally supportive of the ORC and the AAS.

But the outcome is unsatisfactory. It is less extreme than the original, but as an example of the absurdity that its authors keep coming up with, under the AAS, under-18s are not supposed to walk without adult supervision in the Botanic Gardens. What that demonstrates is that the process is flawed. In two years of drafting and redrafting to accommodate the competing interests of potential endorsees, it is still a nonsense. Worse is that it is open to regular review and we know the strongest lobbyists long term won't be the amateur groups.

That's almost the whole story in outline. But there is another twist. Last year, Adventure Victoria discovered that the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) who administer parks and public lands were starting to include community groups in an ongoing review of commercial licensing. And AAS already has regulatory status over licences. We discovered DSE, VTOA and ORC documents that foreshadow or lobby for this kind of outcome.

Then, in February this year, DSE published a paper that seemed to foreshadow making licences compulsory for clubs. Shortly after, DSE assured us that this was an error and would be

changed. And we seem to have kicked up enough awareness in the meantime that we are reasonably confident of that outcome. Even VicWalk supports our position on this one. But it demonstrates that the AAS project is part of a wider push.

Putting the licensing threat aside, does the AAS matter?

The ORC has claimed loudly and often that the AAS will be the new benchmark in common law. Even though there is evidence that few endorsees have even read them, with many apparently authoritative bodies still endorsing each AAS, they will certainly have credibility in court.

That's the main issue: a lobby group driven benchmark in court, one which can't threaten the commercial lobbyists but has serious implications for us.

But there are other issues too. The ORC now plays on this project being good for insurance. We have foiled the managing department, Sport and Rec, and they have not a single item of correspondence supporting that assertion. But if they succeed in making this the benchmark for insurability for commercials, it will have to reflect commercial practices as it did in its original form. And that will have the effect of forcing clubs into commercial standards to keep insured. As for freedom of access to public land, Land managers need insurance too, so...

What's the solution? The compromise that we tried to achieve at VicWalk was to get the ORC to accept a version of AAS -

Bushwalking that clearly stipulated separate standards for commercial and non-commercial activity in relation to each issue.

But it turned out to be an industry requirement that this not happen. Later, as Adventure Victoria, we had the law laid down to us by the Camping Association (a large industry association of camp operators) and Victorian Tour Operators Association on that point. The depth of their justification was that what is what is safe for one is safe for all, a tiny part of the jigsaw even if it were remotely close to true.

These were the organisations that really controlled the project, holding the chairs of the AAS Steering committee and the ORC respectively and they told us that they had no interest in considering our views.

But I'm glad we bushwalkers got blocked. Participation in any form was a mistake. The very concept is rigged against us. If we as amateurs want codes of practice, we can write them ourselves as we see fit, by federation, maybe just by club, or perhaps not at all, whatever fits. That's the key: whatever fits, not one-size-fits-all. What Adventure Victoria has campaigned for ever since to is get the AAS to explicitly limit its scope to the commercial field that it was originally intended to serve.

In conclusion, you in NSW have the luxury of being forewarned. Please take advantage of it. Form a view, whatever might be, and dig your heels in early enough to hold your ground.

Bushwalkers Are Never Lost

The claim of our Confederation, as enunciated by Paddy Pallin long ago, is “bushwalkers are never lost – just geographically embarrassed”. But what do your loved ones at home do when you are geographically embarrassed? Worry of course when you don’t return home on time!

My experience over many years is that most overdue bushwalking trips are not the result of injury but rather from unexpected circumstances such as navigation error, unexpected cliff lines, dense scrub regrowth, member lack of fitness etc.

Your loved ones will need to decide when to contact the Confederation Search & Rescue section – Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS). BWRS has been the Confederation self-help search & rescue for bushwalkers since 1938. We have members with a broad depth of experience who have often responded at short notice to bushwalkers (and others) lost or injured in the bush.

However, in general, experienced bushwalkers should be allowed some extra time to “geographically de-embarrass”. That is, to overcome their navigation mistake / unexpected circumstances

and get back on route. They certainly don’t need the embarrassment and possible media report of a large Police search for just taking a little more time than planned!

The “geographically de-embarrass” rule of thumb adopted by BWRS for many years has been to allow up to lunch time on the following day after a one day walk. For two day weekend walks the rule of thumb allows up to nightfall on the following day. One can, of course, contact BWRS within this ‘rule of thumb’ time to express concerns. (Early contact allows preplanning in case a search is required and can be comforting to loved ones.)

To contact BWRS phone 13 22 22 and quote pager number 6277321. The pager operator will ask you for your message. Now, remember since you cannot say much in a pager message the aim of your pager message **MUST BE** for BWRS to contact you, eg “contact Bob on 4455 6XXX re overdue trip in Budawang”.

Any search will be under the control of the NSW Police as a result of their proclaimed role of responsibility for life and limb. BWRS will contact the most appropriate Police on your behalf. The usual initial Police response is to do a helicopter surveillance of the probable area for the missing bushwalkers. Helicopter searching depends heavily on missing persons attracting the attention of the helicopter crew. Ground search teams will only be sent out after an unsuccessful helicopter

surveillance. BWRS may be called in at this point.

Alternately, you the bushwalker may need to call for help if something goes wrong. See the companion article under this heading for suggestions about what you the bushwalker can do.

Did you follow the rule of “let someone know before you go”? See the article of this name also in this issue of The Bushwalker about this. It contains the information that BWRS will ask of your relatives. The more information they provide, the easier the search will be. At the least, they should be able to answer these questions:

- What are the names of all the bushwalkers?
- What is their level of experience?
- What type of equipment / extra food did they take?
- Does anyone have a medical condition that requires regular medication such as diabetes, epilepsy etc? When are they likely to run out of medication?
- What was the route of the bushwalk, and what maps did they take?
- When were they due to complete the bushwalk?
- Where will their cars be parked, and what are registration numbers?
- What are the prevailing weather conditions?

Keith Maxwell
President BWRS



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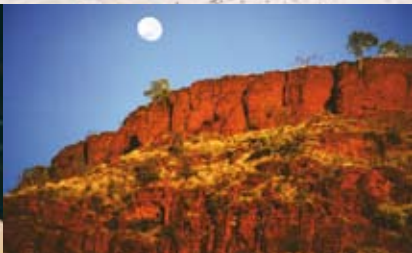
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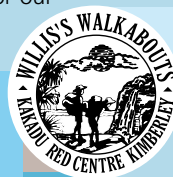
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If Something Goes Wrong

What should you do if there is an accident / injury on your bushwalk? How soon would help arrive? There are three ways you could raise the alarm:

- Have a team walk out
- Use a mobile phone
- Use an EPIRB beacon.

"Where's Captain Scott?" was the question asked from the little ship that runs daily from Akaroa to Lyttelton Heads in New Zealand on February 10th 1913. Captain Scott with E. A. Wilson & H. R. Bowers were the last to die on March 29th 1912 from the tragic return journey to the South Pole. No communication had reached the outside world of the end of this expedition despite the bodies being found on November 12th 1912.

When things go badly wrong on your bushwalk you need to get a message to rescue services. Otherwise there could be a long wait until friends at home raise the alarm. Rescue services such as NRMA (helicopter) Careflight take pride in responding promptly to alarms once they have been alerted!

Until help arrives you need to be sure that adequate First Aid can be provided to the injured person. How many people in your Club have current First Aid qualifications? Visit the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) website at www.bwrs.org.au to register on-line for the next St John Ambulance Senior First Aid Certificate course?

How can you get a message out to rescue services? There are three common ways. Firstly, you could ask a team of two or more bushwalkers to walk out of the bush. They would aim to get to a farmhouse / town or their cars. It is vital that they have written accurate information of the patient's location, as much medical history as you can ascertain, and know who else is with the patient, etc?

Remember, that when you contact "OOO" the operator may ask for the nearest cross street! Injured bushwalkers are rare compared to motor vehicle accidents. Be patient and provide a six figure Grid Reference with Map Name & number. What is the nearest feature that would be found on a Road Atlas – a town, tourist waterfall / lookout?

The second method to raise the alarm is via the mobile phone. Many successful rescues have started with a mobile phone call. However, beware of the limitations of mobile phones such as reception coverage and battery strength. The mobile phone network is a system for phone communication in towns and cities. Even if you are near a town the mobile phone will still rely on line of sight for communication. As a minimum you may need to get up to a high point to have adequate mobile phone coverage. SMS messages can sometimes get out when voice messages cannot. Conserve battery strength – a mobile with a flat battery is only pack ballast. Save your mobile for when you really need it.

The third method to raise the alarm is

to use an EPIRB personal locator beacon. Again, many successful rescues have started with an EPIRB beacon. However, there are also limitations for EPIRBs. Currently over 90% of EPIRB alarms are false alarms! You will need a clear view of the sky to get your EPIRB signal up to a satellite. If you cannot get a good GPS location then you are not getting good signals down from GPS satellites. (Why then would your EPIRB signal readily get up to a satellite?) Is there a high point nearby that gives a wide view of the sky?

An EPIRB gives a distress location only – no more. It may take several hours for enough satellites passes to give an accurate fix for rescue services. Only then will the rescue start.

The EPIRB of choice is the digital 406MHz system. The older analog system is being phased out. Unlike the older system all 406MHz EPIRB beacons are individually registered (no charge). Emergency Services can contact the registered beacon holder to determine if the alarm is false or not. Read the EPIRB instructions – it is possible to test your EPIRB without causing a rescue.

When a severe injury occurs on your bushwalk you will need to get a message out to emergency services. I prefer to minimize risk by following a simple principle – the more remote that I am in the bush, the more carefully I bushwalk

Keith Maxwell
President BWRS

"Let Someone Know Before You Go"

Safe bushwalking does not have to be boring BUT as a minimum you should follow this simple motto from Victoria. You Club should adopt and enforce this policy.

Some years ago I was asked for a simple list of bush safety hints for a rescue display. Now, many persons have written at length with long lists about safety in the bush. However the simple list below seems to cover most of the incidents where BWRS has been involved or media reports. Really clever people manage to ignore multiple safety points.

DO give the names of all group members and complete route details of where you are going to close relatives / friends or police. include details of where your car(s) will be parked.

DO tell them when you are leaving and returning and anyone's special medical conditions e.g. diabetes, asthma.

DO notify them of your safe return.

DO take the correct map and compass. know how to use them.

DO take appropriate clothing / footwear. Always take a windproof / waterproof parka and clothing that can keep you warm when wet eg wool and definitely not jeans.

DO take waterproof matches and some spare food in case of delays. Always take

some cold snack food such as dried fruit, nuts or chocolate for quick energy.

DON'T overestimate your abilities. Always allow time for the unexpected eg thick scrub, cliffhines.

DON'T go faster than the slowest member of your group. At regular intervals do a head count of your group.

DON'T split up your walking group (except for below) during the trip. There is safety in numbers.

DON'T leave an injured person alone in the bush. A walking group of three or more will allow one to look after the injured while the others go for help.

DON'T keep moving when lost. Find a campsite nearby with water that will be visible from a helicopter. Wave vigorously at any helicopters; they are probably looking for you!

DON'T forget if you are overdue to phone home from the first phone box or as soon as you have mobile phone reception.

While, poor equipment can make your trip unsafe, good equipment may make your bushwalk more enjoyable but not necessarily safer. You also need personal fitness combined with good trip leadership.

There are many great potential bushwalks within NSW / Australia. There is still bushwalking country to explore. Just recently unrecorded aboriginal cave

art was found in Wollemi National Park. So, your bushwalking does not have to be boring.

All searches for missing bushwalkers / persons start by asking what was the planned trip? Bad navigation OR deviations from this planned walk all make the search harder. In November 2002 an injured inexperienced team who went badly off course on Newnes Plateau were not found for three days! There are still bushwalkers missing in Tasmania who did not "let someone know before you go".

Keith Maxwell
President BWRS.



Walking in the Alps

Part 1

Linda Broschofsky

The Alps conjure up images of snow capped peaks, tranquil mountain lakes, dramatic, sprawling glaciers and hillsides blanketed in wild flowers. They are the birth place of mountaineering and mountain walking, yet few people realise that the Alps do not lie only in Switzerland. Their back bone runs through six countries and with an enormous network of mountain huts that offer simple accommodation and meals, there is really no need to carry more than a day pack, even on a multi day walk. And we didn't.

I had been to Europe many times before, but had never been... up there!!! That mystical place in the mountains that I knew would one day draw me up as high as I could go. In my mind that place was somewhere on the very top of a mountain with nothing surrounding it but more snow capped peaks. I didn't think I would find it, but I did.

In July 2005, my travel buddy and I set off on a month long trip with the intention of doing various multi day and day hikes - and the Swiss Alps were not part of our plans. We wanted to do some walking in

little known places that would take us to huts where the locals would be, in Austria, Italy and Slovenia. My German is fluent and when that didn't work in one part of Italy, Spanish did. As a result

we met some amazing people up in those mountains and in the tiny villages below. We were always treated with kindness and people went out of their way to give that little extra in exchange for a little conversation.

I am writing this in three parts, as I would like to share with you three different walks. So come with me as I take you on a three day circuit walk in Slovenia, a tiny country wedged between Austria and Croatia. Our destination here are the Julian Alps, the most easterly section of THE ALPS!



Lake Bled, where the Julian Alps end

Still lying there at 8:30 am, hours after we should have gotten up, I thought what the hell, let's just go and see what happens. If it's really miserable we'll just turn back, at least we could say we tried. From then on our plan was to try and make the 2nd hut, Vodnikov Dom, rather than the 3rd, where we would spend the night. Sounds easy, but we still had to get a bus to Ribez Lav on the shores of Lake Bohinj, half an hour away, and then walk to a tiny village called Stara Fuzina, where the trail starts.

It was 12:30pm and we were just starting out from Lake Bohinj, we knew we were hours and hours behind schedule, but the sun was shining and it was hot and we knew that the sun set at around 9pm, so we had at least 8 or so hours of day light to reach the hut. By my estimations it should take us 6 hours to get there.

The trail goes by Mostrica Gorge, a very spectacular and narrow slot canyon. I couldn't help but think about all the canyons, including myself, who would just love to get down there and see what it hides. From the gorge it wasn't long before we reached the 1st hut where we had our lunch, which we had brought with us. (The only food we had, except for biscuits. The hut systems are fantastic. You can get a bed and a meal at any time of the day at very reasonable prices. We had no need to carry any food with us. Local, homemade food, was much more appealing.)

Continuing through meadows, the valley walls soon closed in and the trail becomes an ancient, steep and stony shepherds' road, leading to a high alpine meadow. Once again, the gods looked after us. Just as we crossed that meadow and re- entered the forest, the heavens opened but the tree cover kept us relatively dry. We didn't even need to get out the wet weather gear. That's the beauty of pine and beech forests. A natural umbrella! And unbelievably, as we left the protection of the trees, it stopped raining. We were bone dry.

We were still climbing steeply, with the trees becoming scarcer as we gained altitude. In amongst the woody shrubs, we came across a chamois or zlatorog, in Slovene. A cross between a goat and

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antelope, an animal endemic to the Alps. We felt lucky as this animal is shy of humans and revered in Slovenia. So much so that mountain lore speaks about a mythical chamois with golden horns who lived on Triglav and guarded its treasure.

After what seemed an eternity the trail started to traverse across the steep scree slopes. We were now well above the tree line. And there was the hut (1860m), shingle clad and sitting right beside the trail. We had gained 1600m in height in only 9 km. But these huge ascents and then descents were to become the norm. It was just before 7pm and my estimate of 6 hours was correct. Other hikers had arrived hours before we had but the very hospitable caretakers did not turn us away, even though the hut was full. She managed to find 2 spare beds in the attic, with pillows and blankets and made sure we still got a hot, homemade meal before the kitchen closed, even if it was only barley porridge with a big piece of ham. Something very, very European! It was filling and, well, anything tastes good when you are hungry. Lying in our cosy little beds, we could see Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain, through the attic window. It was 9:30pm and it was just getting dark.

Mountain weather is unpredictable and the next morning began with a grey, overcast sky. The 2 pieces of bread and tea that I had for breakfast, didn't really sustain me long enough as the weather turned increasingly windy and bitterly cold. We were still gaining altitude, and by the time we got to the hut directly beneath Triglav, 2 hours later, my hands, feet and face were almost frozen. The weather had really closed in, we couldn't see through the fog but at least it wasn't raining! There was no way we even discussed an ascent of Triglav. It was snowing up there! Lunch within the confines of the hut, Planika Dom (2399m), was beckoning. "I'll have pancakes please!"

Having thawed out, we were ready to continue, the weather had improved slightly too. We were glad it had as we had to negotiate a tricky section, where the trail traverses narrow ledges that are cabled so walkers don't slip off the side of the mountain. It would have been all the more dangerous if the rocks had been slick from the rain. With the cable-secured sections behind us we then had to walk up and over a saddle, but we became lost as the wind increased and the many trails were not very clear. We started to take one but as it got narrower realized it was an animal track. So we had to turn back again. The steep sided mountains all looked the same and there were a number of ways up and over that looked possible but only the correct one wasn't dangerous. It was my GPS that saved us. I knew what direction we needed to be heading, and luckily I had saved a waypoint of the hut where we had lunch, so the compass on the GPS gave me the exact direction of the hut from where we had come and therefore what direction we should be heading. We scrambled up the steep scree gully towards the saddle and eventually found the track markers. The winds at the top were gale force and I felt my outer extremities freezing again. The energy was

being zapped from our bodies by the cold so we huddled behind a rock to put on more clothes and stuff ourselves with biscuits. Energised, we headed across the plateau, careful not to fall into one of the many sinkholes that pockmarked the landscape.

Beyond the plateau, the trail descends into the Triglav Lakes valley. We had to descend 1000m along a very steep, narrow switch back trail filled with loose rocks. My nightmare had begun. I hate steep, slippery downhill! And sure enough I fell, twice. Once banging my knee on a very sharp rock as I stumbled and the other time my legs slipped right out from under me, and I landed on my butt, again on a sharp rock. Luckily it was my turn to carry the pack and it broke my fall.

These final 2 hours seemed to take forever. Once in the valley we crossed a series of meadows and walked by some stunning high alpine lakes, but we didn't appreciate the beauty of the area as it had started to rain and we were tired and wet from having to brush past all the grasses and bushes. At that moment, I'd had enough. Give me above tree line walking any day! And where was that hut?

Koca pri Triglavskih jezerih (1691m) is in a meadow overlooking Double Lake. We had a whole dorm to ourselves even though there were lots of other people there. The funny thing is that during the day, we never came across any other people on the trail.

Our 3rd and final day started early. We wanted to be back in Bled tonight. It was sunny and warm, finally a glorious day. There is no such thing as a gentle warm-up in these mountains. It's either straight up or down. And the start to our day was another climb up a very steep, cabled escarpment just to get the heart racing! At the top lay our reward: sweeping views of Double Lake and the hut below. In fact, the whole valley lay before us. Once over the crest, the walking became easy as the ground gently undulated through high alpine meadows filled with wild flowers. Even cows wearing cow bells!

Two hours later we came across Planina Visevnik (1618m) a few rustic huts, where we could get some light refreshments. Here we met Daniel, a Slovene, who insisted we stay for a cup of herbal mountain tea.

He sat with us as we drank our tea and he spoke to me about

life in Slovenia and his work with the Alpine Association. His German was very good and every now and then he tried to throw in a bit of his limited English for the benefit of my friend. It can get very tiring translating continuously. He knew a lot about the mountains, especially the plants. He told us of a beautiful trail that goes through a meadow filled with Arnica flowers. So when we set off and asked which way would lead us to these flowers, of course the answer was.... Up there! So we climbed up yet another embankment to more meadows and found Arnica montana growing up there amongst hundreds of wildflowers, including alpine roses and the tiniest orchids.

The steep descent down to the final hut was tough on the feet and legs but knowing that we could get lunch there made it bearable. We were starving. By the time we walked the final hour back to Stara Fuzina, I almost collapsed because my feet and legs were so sore. At one point I didn't know if I could walk down hill any more. Today's 1400m descent was brutal as the last section of trail through the forest was another very stony shepherd's road. But we wanted to be back in Bled that night and worked very hard to do it. And we did make it!

NB. We returned to Austria the next day, and spent the next 3 days recovering in a small town on a lake. We could barely walk, having strained every muscle in our legs on that final day, having ascended a total of 2450m and descended over 38km in 3 days.

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Air Niugini

Folly Point - Budawangs

Paul Ellis

On Saturday morning 18th September 2004 I joined 6 other members of the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers for a 2 day hike to Folly Point in the Budawangs. I had recently done this walk only a few weeks beforehand, but with several club members making a return to the area I was hopeful there was much more to experience and see, and maybe I could show the group something new too. The walk was led by Sandra Kelley and our group also consisted of Brett & Karen Davis, John Prior, Ray Spratt and Colin Taylor (who was attempting his first overnight fullpack walk with the club)

After meeting up with the rest of the group at the junction of Turpentine & Braidwood Roads at 8.30am we drove off to Sassafras and the Budawangs car park. This drive was to reveal the first highlight

the east, Bhundoo Hill beside the track approximately halfway to Newhaven Gap and the small rocky outcrop further on. It was at this outcrop we stopped for the obligatory morning tea, climbing up to take in a few of the views, dominated by the Clyde Gorge to the east.

Continuing on we passed through the gate which several years ago would have been our starting point and followed the road a short distance to the Folly Point trackhead, arriving just before 10:50 am. This was marked by 2 stone cairns and the words 'Folly Point' and an arrow scratched into the rock. Nearby we noticed two mountain bikes chained to a tree (these people had the right idea). We hoped they weren't planning to camp overnight at Folly Point - there are very few tent sites available at the camping ground. It could be a very tight squeeze indeed.

We followed the track southwards

break to admire the views before we followed the tracks further, descending then ascending to just below Mitchell Lookout. The last pass was between two very narrow rocks. On this rock platform we dropped packs for a 12:50 pm lunch.

With lunch finished we continued on, the track made its way across a rocky section, then we came to an apparent track intersection. It could be obvious that we should head straight ahead, but this is just a small animal pad and my experience in walking this track just a few weeks ago meant that we correctly took the right hand turn and followed a very faint trail that required a little scrambling. Very shortly we found ourselves at the edge of The Ravine, a steep section of rock that has to be negotiated with care as you descend to the gully below. The slope is often very slippery, especially after wet weather, so we were thankful there had been no rain for some time. At the bottom of the ravine we followed a faint cairned track uphill through a forest floor of loose rocks, leaf litter, bark and rotting logs. As it leveled out the track became more defined and we made the long journey to the rocky platform of Folly Point, a section that never seemed to end. Eventually we reached a stone cairn and dropped packs. The cairn marked a small track heading into the undergrowth that eventually would lead us to the Folly Point camping area. Instead we walked south west for 5 minutes following a number of stone cairns to Folly Point Lookout.

Everyone was impressed with the views from the lookout. Straight ahead was the imposing structures of The Castle, Shrouded Gods Mountain and Mount Cole. To the right was Mount Elliott, Sturgiss Mountain and Quilty's Mountain, to the left was Mount Talaterang, Pigeonhouse Mountain and Byangee Walls. We could also pick out Crooked Falls, Mount Tarn and Mount Haughton. A lone falcon, which Brett informed us was an Australian Kite, flew up out of Hollands Gorge below us and landed on a rocky point not far away. None of the walking group but myself had been here before and I took great pride in being able to show these people something new, for it is usually the other way round with members of the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers showing me something I had not seen before. It felt good to repay the favour. We explored along the cliff edge for a short time, then returned to our packs.

It was a short walk to the campsite, following first a track through dense bush, then a well cairned rock platform before descending to a small wooded area beside a creek. We arrived right on 3:00 pm and fought for prime campsites. As expected there were too many tents and as I started to pitch mine I was joined by Colin who noticed there was enough room next to my tent for his. With our tents pitched I made my way to the rock pool to replenish my water supply. The walk in had been very hot and I had



The Castle, Shrouded Gods, Mt Cole and Donjon from Folly Point Lookout

of the weekend as we all witnessed 2 wild Emus grazing on the side of the road during the ascent to the Sassafras gate. Many of us had never seen Emus running wild before. We negotiated the 5 gates along the private road to the car park, approximately 8km from Newhaven Gap and wasted little time donning packs and heading out just after 9:00 am. It was a rather warm day, no wind, but plenty of cloud about. There was very little blue sky to be seen.

No one was looking forward to the 8km walk down the access road to Newhaven Gap. After all these years since the access point was moved bushwalkers everywhere have complained long and hard about the extra walking required. In fact, when you look at the distance you have to walk in to Newhaven Gap and then return you could basically say this stretch of road would constitute a day walk all on its own. There is very little of interest along the route save for distant views of Mt Tianjara and Kangaroo Hill to

through thick scrub and Banksia trees, crossing occasional rock platforms and gaining tantalising glimpses of the Clyde Gorge, Mt Tianjara and Mount Bushwalker to the east. To the west we occasionally got views of Quilty's Mountain, Mt Haughton, Hoddles Castle Hill and beyond. After a very short ascent and a slog through a short boggy section of track the route was made harder as the scrub had become quite overgrown along the track, most of which was prickly hakea. This momentarily slowed us down, but by midday we had arrived at the cliff edge overlooking the small valley before it rose up to meet Mitchell Lookout. We stopped here for a short 5 minute break before locating and following a well defined track that descended to the valley below. The valley was a short crossing and then the track ascended to a small rock platform that gave us excellent views across to The Castle, Shrouded Gods Mountain, Mount Cole and Donjon Mountain. Sandra allowed another rest

completely drained my 3 litre hydration bag. My new Katadyn water filter worked brilliantly and within minutes I had completely topped up the 3 litre bag.

There was no rest with the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers. I was quickly called back to camp as we were going to do a quick walk down Watsons Pass. As I passed my tent I grabbed my camera and caught up with the rest of the group. To the south of the camping area we crossed a long rock platform, passing the visitors logbook just above the famous sink holes along the creek. Then we descended a deep crack in the rock and negotiated a couple of large rock ribs, descending off the last one using a length of chain and 2 metal pegs conveniently hammered into the rock. We then descended through the cliff-line of Watsons Pass which was easier than I had expected, despite a couple of sections that required confident scrambling and one drop requiring a chimney manoeuvre. At the bottom the track descended steeply through the forest. Brett wanted to take a look at the Watsons Pass camping cave but daylight was fading and in my rush to catch up I had not grabbed my head torch. I was not keen on climbing back up in the dark. About halfway down, John decided he was going no further and stated he would wait. I decided to stay with him while the others continued on. We gave them 15 minutes to return.

The 15 minutes went by and there was no sign of the other group. John tried a couple of calls, with no answer so we decided to head back to the campsite. If need be, we could always start a search come morning. We slowly climbed back up the hill, taking our time to make sure we took the right gully back through Watsons Pass. Halfway up we heard the sound of voices below us so we waited for the rest of the group to catch up. They had successfully found the cave, right on the return time deadline and found it occupied by the owners of the two bikes we had seen earlier in the walk. We climbed back up the pass and made our way back to camp and prepare dinner.

The camping area had a good sized communal gathering area, complete with fireplace (right next to my campsite).



Mt Tianjara (on left), Pigeonhouse, Byangee Walls (Centre) and The Castle from Folly Point Lookout

While Brett & Karen were moving an assortment of rocks and logs for seating, Karen lifted a large stone and found my missing Swiss Army Knife which I had lost on my previous walk here a few weeks ago. It had obviously slipped off the log I had placed it on and slipped under the lip of the stone. It was still in very good condition apart from some rust on the key ring. With darkness falling everyone prepared and ate their meals and sat around the campfire talking.

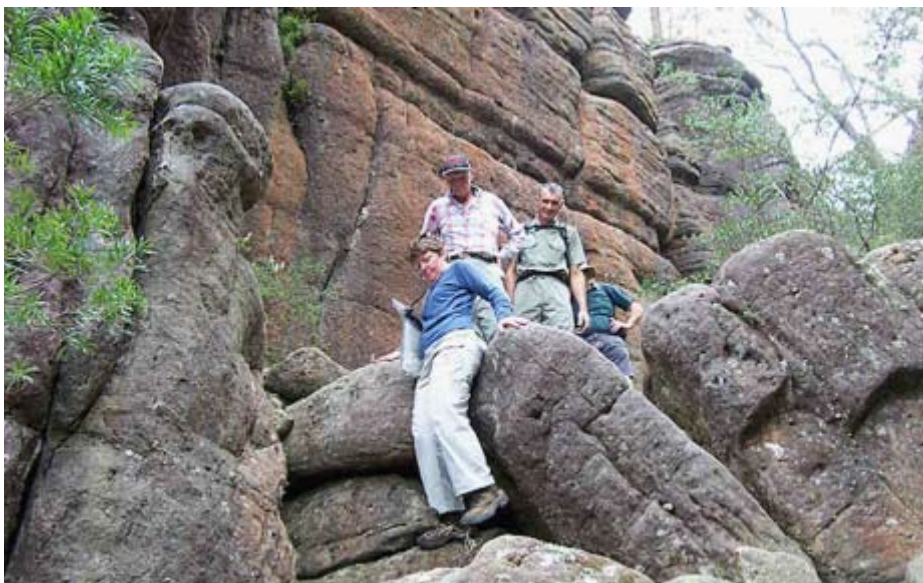
During the night I awoke to the sound of heavy rain on my tent. I hoped it was just a passing shower and I would greet a sunny day when I exited the tent next morning. It was not to be. At 7:15 am I unzipped my tent to see mud everywhere. The camping area was clouded in mist and Colin had erected a tarp over the communal area where everyone else had gathered to keep out of the light rain that was now falling and to prepare breakfast.

Karen had wanted to visit Munnuldi Falls this morning and had arranged a 7:00 am wake-up for those interested in going, but the wet weather had thwarted those plans. John had wanted to return to

the lookout and photograph the sunrise over the Castle, but his plans were thwarted also. It was decided we would head out as best we could in the lousy conditions. The wet weather put a damper on all exploratory plans for today. It was a wet, muddy and miserable experience dismantling the tent and packing the rucksack - so much for a lighter pack, the wet tent well and truly making up for all the food eaten yesterday. By 8:50 am we were all packed and ready to move off.

No one was really keen, despite wearing wet weather jackets, to take the lead and cop the first load of water from the rain saturated scrub. For most of the walk back John valiantly took this job with myself, Brett and Sandra taking over from time to time. By now the rain had eased considerably and we picked up our pace through the 'Misty Mountains'. Within one hour we had reached the ravine which by now was quite slippery and we gingerly climbed our way up. We wasted little time ascending to Mitchell Lookout where we stopped for a quick morning tea before continuing. The low cloud covered everything and visibility was restricted to around 30 metres. We crossed the small valley and ascended the other side and continued on towards the main road at Newhaven Gap arriving right on midday. I was thankful for the heavy fog: you did not have that awful view of the access road winding and ascending way into the distance from the high vantage point of the trackhead.

We gamely plodded on, some of us very keen to put on some pace to keep warm, others happy just to take their time. At 1:15 pm we arrived at the campsite just 600 metres from the carpark. With its sheltered benches, water tank and toilet, an opportunity for a comfortable lunch could not be ignored. It was just after 2:00 pm when we arrived back at the vehicles and thanked Sandra for a wonderfully enjoyable weekend (despite the wet weather and the access road).



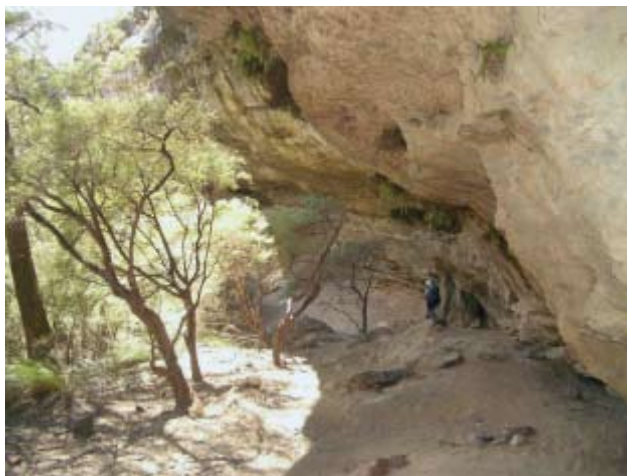
A Side Trip down Watsons Pass

Wild Dog Mountains

Steve Deards, Oct 2005

We left the car park at Carlons around 9 am and wandered down through the nettles in Carlons Creek to Breakfast Creek, which was actually flowing. Then we headed up the murderous BlackHorse Ridge, through BlackHorse Gap, past Mt Warrigal and along Mt Dingo to Splendour Rock. After a short break to admire the view, we descended the Pass via a rusty chain and spikes in the cliff to Little Dingo Hill. We then turned east and followed various ridges down to the Coxs River. We spent the night here on a terrace above the river, with plenty of good crystal-clear water from a side creek.

Next day, we crossed the Coxs River and climbed up the long and steep Morriberri Spur to Mt Kooroogama (1) and the start of the Gangerang Range. We followed the top all the way to Gentles Pass, which is a fairly easy pass up through the cliff line to Kooriekirra Top. We enjoyed spectacular views to Splendour Rock and east all the way to Kings Tableland. To the south, Ti Willa plateau was close by and Mt Jellore was a bump



100 Man Cave

on the horizon. From here, we headed for Dex Creek, but poor navigation from the leader and failing daylight meant an improvised campsite for the night. It was cold and windy here, but water was close and it was relatively flat.

We left camp pretty early next day, and managed to find Dex Creek, where we chatted to another party. Onwards to Mt Cloudmaker, where the visitors book was missing. After a compulsory stop here for a photo and munchies, we headed off to Ti Willa Plateau to search for the elusive 100 Man Cave. Prior to leaving on the walk I had done some research and had a grid co-ord for the cave that Lee entered into his GPS. Consequently, after some scrub bashing and some false leads, we picked up a track that took us straight to the cave. What a great place!

It seems that the cave is no secret though, as there were many footprints on the sandy cave floor.

We exited to the east up an interesting slot in the cliff line that took us back to the plateau top and into the scratchy scrub, which gradually thinned as we headed north-east to Compagnoni Pass. At the top of the pass we had lunch overlooking most of the Wild Dog Mountains. The Pass comprises a chain to hang onto and steel spikes jutting from the cliff face to act as treads. Once at the bottom we had a little trouble locating Ti Willa ridge for the descent to the Kowmung River, but the GPS again proved its worth and we were soon

heading down a fairly clear spur. On the way down we saw the only goanna to be sighted on the trip.

At the river, we walked downstream to a nice grassy flat just across Wonga Wonga Brook. It had been a pretty hot day, so we all ventured into the river for a very quick dip. The river was quite high, so our plan to walk along it the next day was changed to another 500 m ascent, this time up a spur to Big Wonga Mountain. The night was calm and quite

warm, with plenty of stars.

Next morning, we started early for the climb up to Big Wonga, the track being known as Veyret's Horse Track. The forest at the top of the Gangerang Range is probably the nicest in that part of the Blue Mountains. It consists of mature Turpentine and Ironbark with a ferny ground cover and a few stringybarks thrown in. We also saw two Wonga pigeons after which the mountain was obviously named. Again, it was tricky picking Bunggalooloo Ridge for the descent down to the Cox River. This is a very long descent, but fairly gradual compared to many others in the area. Lunch was had at the bottom, but we kept it short as we still had a long way to go. There were plenty of snakes along the banks, with the best improvised tap dance going to Lee for his attempt at avoiding a Brown Snake which decided to slither out of the bushes and slide between his feet.

At Mouin Creek we filled up with water for the long climb back up to the top of White Dog Ridge. Here we met Ken, a lone walker from Newcastle. He was also going to fill up at the creek, and carry 4/5 litres to the base of Tarro's Ladder for the night. I offered him a lift to Katoomba Station, which he gratefully accepted, saving him a night in the bush and a long walk with an extra-heavy pack. A little further along at the river gauging station we saw a lyrebird and a white-bellied sea eagle. There seemed to be plenty of trout in the river for it to feast on. On the climb up to White Dog we met a couple of cyclists who had come from Scotts Main Range. How these guys got their bikes up and down Mt Cookem is a mystery to me. It's hard enough just walking up and down it (2). Next stop was Medlow Gap, and then the long walk along the road to Bellbird Ridge and the hill down to the car. We arrived at the carpark with very little daylight left, a 12 hour day to finish off what had been a hard but very enjoyable walk through some classic bushwalking country.

Editor's Notes

- 1 Mt Kooroogama: Dunphy name not on topo maps; NW tip of Oak Terrace
- 2 It's also illegal to ride through that area, with an \$11,000 fine

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Easter Activity on the Northern Tablelands

This Newcastle Ramblers trip was intended as a base camp and day walk arrangement. People were free to come for as many or as few of the walks as they wanted. Consequently, we had between 7 and 11 people for between 2 and 4 days. Figure that one out! We were able to secure accommodation at Yaraandoo – an eco-lodge on the Waterfall way about 50km to the East of Armidale. Yaraandoo had various levels of accommodation available – from hostel style to self contained lodges. We chose the hostel style, and this proved to be a great way to explore the surrounds. People started arriving from late afternoon the day before Good Friday. The continued to arrive up until very late that same night – and some didn't even make it until the following morning. The lodge was well heated and insulated, so the cool nights were not a problem.

The first day saw us venture out to Cathedral Rock NP – which is very close to the lodge. After checking with Colin Wood (caretaker/guide at Yaraandoo) to get the local knowledge, we trundled off to the start point near Cathedral Rock themselves. We planned to do a through walk, so a car shuffle was required. We set off in lovely weather for walking (cool, but bright sunshine) on well-made tracks. Some rock scrambling was required to get to the top of Cathedral Rocks, but there was a stunning view to reward those who ventured to the top. We lunched on top, and then walked on towards Woolpack Rocks. These proved to be a very interesting formation, and we spent some time wandering around on these also. Then, it was a couple of kilometers further to the cars. A quick drive to pick up the cars left at the start point, and then it was back to the lodge for the ubiquitous happy hour (seems to follow the Ramblers around.....). Several of our number elected to take Colin Wood up on his offer to show them around the Rufous Bettong enclosure. There is a colony of bettongs at Yaraandoo – protected from the ravages of foxes and feral cats. Various other wildlife is also housed around Yaraandoo – owls amongst them. These activities were enjoyed by all.

The second day saw us head out to Guy

Fawkes NP. This park lies on the edge of the escarpment, and there were some lovely views to be had. The waterfalls were not at their best – courtesy of a very dry season, however, it was pleasant walking. We were half way through our day walk when the heavens opened, and we were rained upon. The drops were large – and very cold. We made our way through the rest of the walk quickly, and headed back to the cars. On the drive out we found the reason for the very cold rain. There was several inches of hail lying on the surface of the road, and off in the gutters. The way back was hampered by one car having a flat tyre. However, with the assistance of the other people in the car, this was quickly rectified, and we proceeded on to Ebor. There, we had chocolate ice-creams (or those of us who are naughty did anyway!). We were unable to get the tyre fixed, so we drove carefully back to the lodge (via the Ebor Falls) – which were a lovely sight.

The following day, Colin Wood accompanied us on a walk near Point Lookout in the New England NP. We followed the Lyrebird track around the escarpment, and saw some fantastic rock formations (the Weeping Rock amongst them), and then a lovely waterfall. We ended up for lunch on top of the escarpment at Wrights Lookout. This had lovely views, and the weather was just fabulous.

Unfortunately, on the way back down from Wrights Lookout, one member slipped and sprained her ankle. She was able to walk out to the closest car, but had a very sore ankle for a few days. The rest of the group then walked back on the Lyrebird trail (the upper portion) and back to the cars. A quick car trip took us to Point Lookout, and



Lunch on the Northern Tablelands

we had a brief walk around the Lookouts there. Wonderful views.

Once again, happy hour found us, and we had a merry time in the Lodge. The following morning, we packed up, and did a short walk around Yaraandoo. We found our way down to the river, and spent a happy hour or so watching the water splash over the rocks. We then followed some more of Yaraandoo's tracks back to the lodge where we bid farewell to Yaraandoo, and each other, and set off on the drive home.

Supplied by Colin Wood from notes from a Newcastle Ramblers member

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Making a route choice in the Northern Tablelands

A Tribute to Brian Walker

August 2005 saw the passing of Brian Walker, a past Secretary and President of The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc. and one of the bushwalking fraternity's most colourful characters.

A long time and very active member of Coast and Mountain Walkers of NSW (where he had also served as Secretary), Brian was renowned for his strength and physical fitness. This was usually demonstrated by his carrying prodigious loads of photographic equipment, red wine and culinary delights, whilst at night around the campfire he would still have the energy to delight us all with his skills

as a raconteur or with a scintillating rendition of Gilbert and Sullivan of the like.

Brian had recently celebrated his seventieth birthday in South West Tasmania (along with Nepal, one of his favourite trekking spots outside NSW). He died suddenly of a ruptured aorta in Royal North Shore Hospital following an air ambulance flight from his newly adopted home in the hinterland of Port Macquarie.

A remarkable man, both Brian and his contribution to bushwalking will long be remembered.

Larry Nolan CMW Delegate

From The mail bag. . .

Dear Sir,
Your article in the last edition Vol 31 No1 2006 "Big Yengo" brought back many memories as I was one of the participants in the walk described. This walk is one that will be etched in my mind forever but Darby left out many small details and I would suggest your readers return to the original article and consider the following omissions. The trip from Singleton to Howes Valley in itself was a major ordeal. The only transport we could arrange was a cattle truck and as you would expect the usual carpet on the floor made sitting somewhat undesirable as a result we all stood hanging on the to side rails for the whole 35 miles. The Singleton Putty road in those days was a narrow dusty dirt track and on many occasions we were engulfed in clouds of choking fine dust which penetrated everything and on arrival at Howes Valley we all looked like ghosts. It was not a good omen for the rest of the walk. The Waring Creek Darby referred to is of course Howes Valley Creek.

The terrain on the top of Mt Yengo was very different compared to the thick scrub it is today as it was clear with low grasses through a base of basaltic boulders. Furthermore the top has a distinct depression or crater being the remnant of the volcanic cone. One cannot see this today.

Our saviour on the long ordeal was an open Jeep with two occupants returning from a kangaroo shooting excursion.

The most pertinent point to note is the task which confronted us bushwalkers where maps were non-existent or at best totally inadequate, especially in rugged country. I have since tried to piece together the route taken on this trip on the now Mt Yengo Map, and looking at the labyrinth of ridges and gullies it is clear that we were in trouble. If only we had a decent map then but I suspect the walk would not have been so memorable.

The GPS now seems to be the crutch for many bushwalkers and although I concede there are circumstances where they are useful I believe that overuse does not develop the real skill of reading the terrain and relying on the ever trusty compass.

Later in 1954 a party of three including myself decided to do Mt Yengo over two

days from the McDonald River again without a map. I recall that drought and very hot weather had made water a real problem. The McDonald River was bone dry but water could be had by digging deep into the sand. We learned this from the animals who were using the same trick. Up on the ridges and in the side creeks it was different matter and as we discovered water was almost non-existent. [Just the same in early 2006 – Ed.]

We reached the summit of Mt Yengo on the first day and were planning to camp somewhere along the side ridges if water could be found. On the descent from the summit one of us decided to leave first and we agreed that we would meet on the ridge top. However when my companion and I reached what we thought was the agreed meeting spot he was nowhere to be found. We were not overly concerned as he was an excellent bushman and we were confident of his capabilities. Our major problem however was to find water as by this time we were almost completely dry. We went searching into the tops of the many hanging valleys which are a feature of this country and by late afternoon we were getting desperate. We eventually arrived at what can only be described as an oasis. It was a small valley, grassy and green with a small swamp fed by a spring. It was only a small pool but it was good enough so we set up camp in an idyllic spot. It had been a very hot day and on dusk we noticed first a mob of kangaroos arriving for a drink. This was soon followed by perhaps thousands of birds, mostly parrots as I recall. It seems we had located probably the only water within many miles. It was one of those magical moments which I will always remember. The next day we returned to the McDonald River and found the footprints of our lost friend who had descended Mt Yengo and ended up on the wrong ridge so he decided to head straight for the McDonald River for the night.

I have since examined the Mt Yengo map and I believe I can pin-point the location of the spring. Maybe one day I will return.

So much for the ramblings of an old bushwalker which I hope your readers may find of interest.

Brian Corlis

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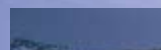
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Cameron Barrie crossing the Snowy River en route to Blue Lake.
Photo: MVP / Taryn Miller



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