


The Bushwalker



Hell Hole Creek,
Kosciusko National Park

Volume 32
Issue 4
Spring 2007

A man wearing a hat, a dark t-shirt, shorts, and tall black boots is sitting on a large, flat rock that overhangs a deep canyon. He is smiling at the camera. The canyon below is filled with dense green vegetation and has steep, rocky walls. The sky is clear and blue.

Don't you wish
you were here?

Photo: Peter Medbury

Contributions of interesting and spectacular bushwalking photos are sought —
you don't want the same photographers all the time to you?

A hiker wearing a blue jacket and dark pants is walking away from the camera on a steep, rocky mountain trail. The trail is composed of loose rocks and scree. The background shows a vast, hazy landscape with distant mountains and a valley.

A summer walk over the
Col du Bonhomme,
France

Photo: Roger Caffin

The Bushwalker

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Editor: Roger Caffin
editor@bushwalking.org.au

Graphic Design & Assembly:
Barry Hanlon

Confederation Officers:
President: Wilf Hilder
president@bushwalking.org.au
Administration Officer:
admin@bushwalking.org.au

Website: www.bushwalking.org.au

Address all correspondence to:
PO Box 2090, GPO, Sydney 2001

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People interested in joining a bushwalking club may write to the Confederation Administration for a list of Clubs, but an on-line list is available at the Confederation website www.bushwalking.org.au, broken up into areas. There's lots of other good stuff there too.



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Volume 32, Issue 4, Spring 2007

From the editor's desk. . .

I am back from three months walking in France with my wife. In my absence Michael Keats of The Bush Club took over as Editor, and with Barry Hanlon they produced the Winter issue. What a spectacular front cover! They did a wonderful job of it, and my thanks to them for their efforts.

We have the usual eclectic selection of articles, from Australia and overseas. It seems that Australian bushwalkers really do wander around the world. I enjoy reading them all, I trust you find the overseas articles of interest as well.

We are still asking for good articles to print. Clubs and members are encouraged to submit relevant articles, with a very 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 available resolution: at least 300 dpi, preferably in their original unedited form. JPG, PDF or TIFF formats are preferred. The text should be sent as a plain text file (*.txt), NOT as a Word file (*.doc). I repeat, please send the pictures separate from the text file; do NOT send them embedded in a Word doc file. Pictures taken from a Word doc file are simply not good enough. And, of course, the Editor is always interested in receiving bushwalking books and maps for review. All enquiries should be sent to: editor@bushwalking.org.au

Please note that opinions expressed by authors may not represent the official opinions of the Confederation or any Club. The Editor's opinions are his own.

Roger Caffin
Editor



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Mt Kelly, ACT

John Evans,
Canberra Bushwalking Club

Day 1

We arrived at the Yankee Hat carpark just before 8 am and stepped out to see the most magnificent view up above the mouth of Middle Creek. Mt Namadgi had plenty of snow, particularly the S flank; Mt Burbidge was crowned in granite and white, and Mt Kelly at the back was whitest of all. Kangaroos grazed in the foreground, no breeze, blue sky above - it was an idyllic day and tempting to believe that our leaders had connections in high places to order such weather.

Away just after 8 am. Our first pause at 3 km done in a sprightly 35 mins to strip down a layer or two. On past the massive boulder which scores a red asterisk on the map and a second pause to top up water at the lower junction of Middle Creek arms. Beautiful walking on a crisp, clear winter's morning. On up the Burbidge ridge with, thank goodness, another pause after the first 100 m climb onto the second level. Great walking this level through open forest. On the next part of the climb we hit the snow at 1300 m and by morning tea at 1460 m (6.8 km, 460 m climb, 2 hr 40 mins to here) there was a covering of several centimetres. A well deserved break of 30 mins on a N facing bare patch, although the probe-equipped, electronic-powered, engineer-wielded thermometer was recording only 5°C.

We continued up towards the 1500 m contour, then sidled round towards and across the arm of Middle Creek which comes down from Bogong Gap. Stunning views up to the snow covered granite bulb on the SW side of Mt Burbidge. At the top of the creek and S of Bogong Gap we hit serious snow and it became obvious that, with snow and ice on the SW ridge of Kelly towards the Scabby ridge, we'd not get through. On up to just SW of the Gap for lunch, this time sitting on granite as the ground was well covered (9.4 km, 600 m climb, 4 hr 40 mins to here). Munch time of 35 mins, with

great views through the trees to Mts Burbidge and Namadgi.

The plan said that we'd drop packs and wander up Mt Kelly, so we headed to the saddle between said hill and SH1733 on the Scabby Range as it heads SE. Keith was leading and I was trudging in his footsteps which, most of the time, were shin deep, but sometimes knee deep. I kindly said "that must sap some energy" and he graciously responded "how about plugging some holes?" I presume this is Aussie understatement, but guessed it meant would I take the lead? It was physically most demanding and I could only keep at it for a few hundred metres (Keith must have done over a kilometre). But we eventually reached a suitable place to drop our packs (GR70464570 MGA94) and thought that if anyone else came along and wanted to pinch them, they could carry them out. (10.1 km, 5 hr 40 mins to here).

We headed up at 1.50 pm through deep snow (at times to our thighs - that would have to be one metre). The scrubby belt was a little difficult. We reached the top, on hands and knees in some places, 1829 m, at 2.40 pm (picture at left).

Astounding, awesome ... just not enough superlatives. This was my 5th time on Mt Kelly, but I've never seen it like this! One of the legends in the party (of which there were four) reckoned that the weather and snow conditions were a one year in ten opportunity. Starting from just E of N there was Mt Namadgi with Rotten Swamp below (picture far right). Then the Mavis Ridge (which drew my attention for a couple of planned walks) round to Mt Burbidge. The Tinderrys sit on the horizon. Swinging S of Burbidge you see down a Middle Creek arm past Yankee Hat N and S to the grasslands and pretend one can see the car at the well defined vegetation edge. S is the top of Kelly with Sentry Box at back, then SW to the way down and up the Scabby Ridge. Far in the distance is Jagungal with the Snowys marching S. W is the unnamed hill which gives access to the Kelly Spur, with Mt Murray directly behind. N from there are Bimberi Peak and the Brindabellas. Closer in to the N is the Kelly Spur and the distinctive Coronet Peak (picture below). What a vista!

The obligatory top shots of the party, of course, to record the event. Our leader also made an entry in the log - a slow process, as the biro needed a shot of warm breath every word or so to keep it going. Much reminiscing concerning previously recorded trips and walkers. The weather-etched trig stick was carrying a little extra weight (see picture top opposite).



Mt Coronet from Mt Kelly



Snow-encrusted trig stick

Away just after 3 pm. The S end of the top afforded us a view down to the top of Sams Creek and we were able to pick out a prospective camp site, under two large eucalypts which kept the area white-free from the snowy surrounds. Back to our gear by 3.35 pm, the descent a little quicker. 1.1 km down through the scrubby belt at the top of Sams Creek and out onto the flats. The viewed camp site was perfect and we dropped packs at GR70134471 MGA94) at 4.15 pm. A fairly confined area and, after I admitted I snored, some happy campers tried to distance their tent sites from mine. Another sited herself excellently around the back of the chosen fire-place (we were in NSW). The usual drill - firewood, tent up, water, etc. I was most pleased with my boots and knee-high winter/wet gaiters - my socks and feet were dry. Dressing for dinner took on added significance as the temperature plummeted - apart from long-johns, I was

most grateful for the loan of a down jacket from Bob E. For me, soup, freeze-dried beef teriyaki, hot chocolate and a little (yes, 300 ml rather than 1 L) port to share. So pleasant round the fire that I stayed up till 7.30 pm. True to self, I dropped and lost a glove while abluting no 1 in the dark. I think I now have 2 left hand gloves after a similar loss in Tassie a couple of years ago. Sermons and rock 'n' roll as usual on the MP3 player. I'd taken the opportunity to test my new 750 gm Western Mountaineering bag and I was very warm - possibly also thanks to clothes, Bob's jacket, silk and thermal liners.

Day 2

The morning dawned crisp and clear. I was rude enough to suggest that several other party members snored - my companions were generous enough to not say whether I'd kept them awake. A leisurely start as there was no option, given the conditions, other than to return via Sams Creek fire trail. The minimum-recording-function on the probe equipped, electronic-powered, engineer-wielded thermometer said -11.2°C. Thank goodness it was not snowing/blizzarding/windy/raining - again, it was a perfect (but cold, still around -10 C) morning. I'd learned some tips around the fire the previous night - if you don't have a wife with you, sleep with your boots and water bottle (and batteries and techno-gadgets, which I already knew). Keith estimates a tent raises the temperature about 5 C (-11-5=-6), so that's why my gaiters and extra water in the tent were frozen in the morning. BTW - Jen H boils the billy last thing, pops the water in her SIG water bottle then in bed (so has a nice hot water bottle) and has liquid H2O for brekky! However, I could only just get my boots



Mt Namadgi and Rotten Swamp from Kelly

and laces pliable enough to put on and someone in the party had to light the fire in order to thaw their boots. Breakfast in bed, with lovely shots to the N as the sun hit the tops (see pic 5).

Away at 8.40 am. The snow was a little crisper and held our weight a little better, but the deeper drifts still had us in up to our knees. Down the flats, across the creek and to our first genuine sighting of Sams Creek fire trail at 9.25 am (GR69784354 MGA94). It comes and goes. Crossed to the W side of the creek and found morning tea at 9.55 am (2.8 km and 1 hr 15 mins to here). A stop to refill water just after as we again neared the creek, then continued up on the dry ground on its W side. Another good, benched, obvious spot on the fire trail at GR70644113 (MGA94).

And so to a crossing of Sams Creek and lunch at 11.35 am (5.5 km and 2 hrs 55 mins to here). Stoves out for a brew and political discussion. Away after 45 mins, a simple matter of following the fire trail round the S of Mt Gudgenby (see pic 6) to cross Naas Creek over a log, then up the S side of the drainage line to the Gudgenby saddle, reaching it at 1.30 pm (8.8 km and 4 hr 50 mins to here). Jen took us on a great route from here, hugging the S bank of the arm of Bogong Creek for much more than I've ever done before. A few old tapes and cairns. Certainly seemed easier and more direct than the sidle around SH1348.

No cairns after a while, but animal pads took us to the footpad again and eventually out onto the green open spaces, then across the main arm of Bogong Creek. Across the culvert at the end of Bogong Swamp, then a vague B-line (my error, as I'd wanted to get back for a little side excursion) through the old Boboyan Pines (I've never seen them in their glory - now eucalypt seed has been scattered in amongst the fallen, burned pines to protect the resultant seedlings from the kangaroos) to the car. At one point, we found a hairless, pink, new-born joey lying on the ground which would die of the cold if not rescued by its mother (we discussed intervention, but decided no). Nature is tough.

Back at the car at 3.35 pm and I took a little detour up to photograph the foresters hut. Another party of walkers had returned from part way up Mt Gudgenby, one a CBC walker♦



Mt Gudgenby

Wilsons Promontory Southern Circuit

Paul Ellis,
Shoalhaven Bushwalkers

On Saturday 25th August 2007 fellow Shoalhaven Bushwalkers Kynie and Sandra joined me for our four day walk through the Southern Circuit of Wilsons Promontory National Park in Victoria. Today was cool and windy and the sky was overcast with light clouds which looked like they would clear.

In 2005 bushfires raged through the park, burning most of the vegetation. Only small pockets of forest remained untouched. During the walk we would make our way through forests of blackened timber and lifeless trees, skeletons of forests once green with vegetation. Yet in the less than 2 years since the fires came through, it was amazing to see how well the forest regrowth had come on.

The walking track initially descends lightly through regenerating forest but soon starts its steady ascent towards Windy Saddle on a series of switchbacks. The recovering forest was dominated by grass trees, ferns and paperbark and the forest was full of birdsong as we ascended. By 10.30am we arrived at Windy Saddle, an open grassy area surrounded by bush on the flanks of Mount McAlister to the south-west and Mount Ramsay to the north. Only 300 metres above sea level, the saddle really didn't offer much in views, but the lush grass and small wooden platform made for a great spot to take a break.

We continued eastwards, descending to Sealers Swamp by a long track that sidled Mount Ramsay, crossing many gullies, one with a small waterfall. This area seems to have escaped the bushfires and we passed through many pockets of sub tropical rainforest dominated by moss covered rocks and tree trunks. We crossed picturesque Blackfish Creek and after crossing a quaint narrow wooden bridge over Sealers Creek it was only about 100 metres of sandy track to the golden sands of Sealers Cove. A 600 metre walk down the beach to the southern end brought us to the mouth of Sealers Creek and a short crossing to the camping area. The water was ice cold but refreshing to our feet.

Once we had chosen a campsite we explored the area, finding an ingenious running water set-up next to the creek where a pipe emptied fresh running water into a hollow log. We found all the campsites bar Roaring Meg Creek had these

contraptions and they proved to be most useful during our walk, even though we played it safe by boiling or treating the water first before drinking. After having lunch, during which we were visited by a couple of very inquisitive Crimson Rosellas, we unpacked our rucksacks and pitched our tents. In the afternoon we explored the area, walking the entire length of the beach to the rocks at the northern end of the cove.

Next morning we were on the track to Refuge Cove by 8:30 am. There was some low cloud about but we could see it was breaking up to reveal another perfect blue sky. Again this section seems to have avoided the devastation of the 2005 bushfires, even some of the wildflowers were out early, adding some colour to the track. It took just one hour to reach the rock platform above Horn Point. From here we had great views back north over Sealers Cove to The Cathedral and a reasonable view of Refuge Cove to the south.

We now descended through thick forest and patches of Sub-Tropical Rainforest to come out onto more golden sand on a small beach on the northern end of the cove. We crossed the sand and entered another track which ascended then descended over the rocky point in the middle of Refuge Cove to the remarkable Boat Camp on the southern beach. It featured a wooden fence which had signs with the names of boats carved by owners of the many vessels that had moored here over the years. These were intermingled with carved whale bones and even footwear depicting boat names.

From Refuge Camping Area we started the gruelling ascent to Kersops Saddle, past a couple of granite slabs with great views of Refuge Cove. Just after mid-day we reached Kersops Saddle with a good view south of Waterloo Bay. The ascent to Kersops Peak was only another 40 metres so we decided to have lunch there, and it was well worth the effort. We had great views of Waterloo Bay with its aqua blue water and white sandy beach. Further to the south was a tantalising view of South-East Point and the lighthouse. After lunch we returned to the track and prepared for our descent to Waterloo Bay.

We descended through the forest quite quickly to the tiny beach of North



Looking back to the mouth of Sealers Creek at low tide

Waterloo Bay, which we crossed to find another track which initially headed inland. This track is quite narrow but very scenic. It was also very undulating as it skirted the ridge above the coastal rocks, providing pleasant coastal views. At 2.45 pm we descended onto the white sand of Little Waterloo Bay. We were the only people there so we were able to pick out the choicest campsites.

We pitched our tents and went for a stroll along the beach. The water was freezing but it soothed our very tired and sore feet. We returned to camp by 4.30 pm to prepare dinner. We had the usual suspects hanging around, this time a Crow and three Magpies. We had finished eating before it got dark and with light fading it started to get quite cold. All three of us were feeling stiff and sore from the day's exertions and were certainly not looking forward to more climbing tomorrow. By 7.30 pm it had



Sealers Cove and the Cathedral from above Horn Point

become so cold we all decided to retire to our tents for an early night.

Next morning we headed through the campsite to the track that would take us over the rocky coastline to Waterloo Bay. It was already a bright sunny and unseasonably warm day with absolutely no cloud in the sky at all. The short track had a few ascents, just enough to warm up the muscles and before we knew it we were standing at the northern end of the beach at Waterloo Bay. We had over one kilometre of soft white sand to negotiate and by the time we had reached the



Kynie crossing Sealers Creek to the camping area

southern end of the beach our legs were quite stiff. The only witness to our humorous attempts at crossing the beach was a lone wallaby sitting on the grass atop a dune behind the beach.

The Lighthouse Track commenced just 50 metres from the southern end of the beach. It soon started to ascend, away from the coastal heath and into burnt forest as it started to climb up to the Boulder Range - so named after the granite tors and boulders seen throughout the range. Up and up it went until we were above Home Cove, climbing past blackened trees and white granite boulders. Only the ground cover was green as the vegetation has just commenced its regrowth here. Less than 100 metres further on we came to a large rock slab, high above the ocean, which gave some magnificent views of almost all the coastline to the north and it felt like we were almost looking down onto South-East Point and the lighthouse. The sea was eerily calm and there seemed to be hardly a wave breaking in sight.

The track now moved inland and started to descend into thick forest, going to South-East Point. We ascended a short slope to the helipad, past some amazing rock formations, then it was onto the main ascent. At the top we made our way past a complex of colonial looking buildings to the lighthouse proper and had lunch on an open grassy section with views all around.

The steep descent back down to the helipad was almost as difficult as the ascent. We continued through the burnt countryside to Telegraph Road and eventually a short cut to Roaring Meg Creek campsite. This descended quite steeply to a side creek and crossed two small ridges before it got there. We found the clearest water at one of the small creeks in the gullies and took the opportunity to top up our hydration bags. Eventually we crossed a new wooden bridge over Roaring Meg Creek and arrived at the lower campsite at 3.50 pm. We climbed the ridge to the top campsites. The ground was very hard and the bushfires had been very fierce here judging by how badly burnt the trees were.



Some of the boat names at Refuge Cove's Boat Camp

We wasted little time in getting our tents pitched and preparing dinner. It was 5.45 pm by the time we got the stoves lit and then the possums came and joined in. We made sure all our food was doubly secured in plastic bags, put in our rucksacks and placed in our tents. It was 8.20 pm by the time we had run the possums out of our camp and we wasted little time in retiring to our tents for the night. However, our night wasn't over just yet: we were all awoken after midnight, firstly by the rising full moon which gave the effect that it was morning, and then after 1.00 am by the sound of howling winds coming through the gullies.

We were up and out of our tents by 6.00 am. The sky was clear and the winds had died down, but there were some ominous looking clouds to the south. We set off on the track behind the toilet block at 8:10 am - a much shorter and more scenic option than walking the full length of Telegraph Road. Initially taking us through what remained of the forest for 500 metres, the track ascended onto scrubby heathland and undulated its way for just over 2 km to join up with the Telegraph Road just south of Martins Hill. We now followed the Telegraph Road for some distance northwards as it descended towards Halfway Hut.

Halfway Hut, originally called Martins Hut, is a solid stone building which was originally built for workers servicing the telegraph line to the lighthouse. Halfway between Telegraph Saddle and the lighthouse, it is partially hidden in the forest and features a picturesque camping area complete with fresh water tank and a pit toilet. Being made of stone the hut has survived numerous bushfires in the area over the years. We continued northwards along the Telegraph Road through badly burnt Ti Tree forest: black lifeless trees surrounded by a

carpet of green undergrowth of ferns and weeds. Just over one kilometre later we passed a side track to Waterloo Bay, and 100 metres further on we took the left hand track to Oberon Bay.

We arrived at Oberon Beach at 10.20 am and stopped for a break. We still had the western coastal walk to go to finish our trip but the open dirt roads were behind us. At the northern end of the beach we waded across Growler Creek. North of the creek along the coastline were more boulders with the orange red lichen, similar to those found on the eastern side of the Prom. The track, which quickly ascended around the headland to Little Oberon Bay, showed evidence the bushfires were pretty fierce here too.

At Little Oberon Bay we crossed a small beach of soft white sand and climbed a long dune to find the track which climbs high above and around a small peninsula known as Norman Point with Little Oberon above us. We decided to take lunch at 12.45 pm on the track where the scenery would be better, rather than in the village of Tidal River. We found a spot on a large rock slab perched above the ocean with views of the offshore islands and a cool breeze welcome in the hot midday sun.

At 1.45 pm we arrived back at Tidal River, loaded our rucksacks into Sandra's car and handed our permits back in at the Ranger Station. It has been a most memorable four days of walking ♦



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Mt Cloudmaker Search

13-15, April 2007

Keith Maxwell & Nic Bendeli, for BWRS

Keith:

The Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) was called out on Thursday evening for an 8 am Friday start at Katoomba Police Station. 'A missing solo male walker had set out from the Kanangra Walls car park on Good Friday last and has been missing since. The person is described as a basic navigator with no experience of the area with minimum water and a sketch map'.

Eleven BWRS members responded. Paul Campbell-Allen was our OiC. We were briefed to drive to Kanangra Walls car park where the Police Rescue Search HQ was set up to start from there. Police Area Command, Police Rescue, Polair, Police radio, SES, NPWS & Ambulance were also present. We were briefed and formed into 3 search teams with one forward communications relay team (also to search Mt Moorilla peak). We were

ferried by Polair (twin engined Squirrel helicopter) out to a landing zone (LZ) on Mt Moorilla, at between 12 am and 1 pm, (10 min flight, saving a day and half walk in). Everyone got a buzz from the ride over some rugged beautiful country.

Team Alpha was tasked to search Moko Creek to the Cox's River (very rugged in part) while team Bravo was tasked to search the Nurla Morella Ridge to the Cox's River. Team Charley was tasked to search Moorilla Creek to the Cox's River. All teams were to regroup at Kanangaroo Clearing. Team Delta was tasked to act as forward communications from Mt Moorilla (using Police radio via UHF) with teams in the deep creek valleys. Bravo would also help where they could relay from the ridge top. Radio communications from the high points were good but not so good in the deep valleys. We



Konangaroo Clearing

all stopped to camp near dusk. Alpha camped in Moko creek, Bravo by the Cox's River while Charley made it to Kanangaroo Clearing by torchlight. Each team had rationalised gear to reduce weight and slept under one fly. No relevant clues were seen by any party.

I was not able to go out on the first day BWRS entered the field (Friday) but attended on subsequent days as a team leader. I believe that the tasks we were given were done well but I was concerned that we were not searching close enough to the last known location of the missing walker. The Police Search Manager confirmed that the missing walker had signed the Mt Cloudmaker logbook.

Teams from NP&WS, SES and RFS (Rural Fire Service) and BWRS were part of extensive searching underway to the north of Mt Cloudmaker in the indistinct bush of the High Gangerangs and ridges towards the Cox's River. However, by Saturday no teams had yet been deployed into country to the south and south west of Mt Cloudmaker (ie, the point last seen). The missing person was an inexperienced bushwalker. A possible scenario was that he had failed to turn west (from near Mt Cloudmaker) towards the usual Dex Creek campsite and had instead descended into a lower part of Dex Creek. The Police Search Manager accepted a recommendation for Foxtrot to search Ti Willa Creek (see separate report from Nic Bendeli (below) while team Echo were to search creeks to the south west of Cloudmaker. Echo deserves credit for their efforts to struggle through these creeks for two days. They may be the first and last Europeans to walk these creeks.

Eventually the walker was found in an unobvious spot among rocks not far from Cloudmaker, above Dex Creek. I was determined that if such a large search was repeated I

would try to ensure good searching occurred around the confirmed location.

Nic Bendeli:

Saturday was fine and sunny. The new searchers were split into teams and readied for searching with 48 hours of rations and overnight gear. Consistent with the new ideas of going light, we tried to keep the pack weights low. Mine was around 10kg. We used the principle of one billy, one stove, one flysheet and shared gear as much as possible.

The briefing started and it was clear that the search was being extended beyond the confines of the standard route. The country was difficult with big gorges, narrow and steep walls and many waterfalls. A job ideally suited for BWRS due to our walking/climbing/caving and canyoning experience. The Police wisely deployed us into the difficult areas and kept other volunteer rescuers for easier terrain.

Our team of three (Foxtrot) boarded the helicopter and started an exhilarating ride over the Kanangra Tops to our departure point on the edge of Mt Cloudmaker. A long half day walk-in was affected in ten minutes and we were able to start searching very quickly. Our team was responsible for searching Ti-Willa Creek.

The descent down the creek was very pleasant and much more open than expected. It was rough and steep going, but the vegetation was easy and we were able to concentrate on searching and calling for the missing party. At one stage we made a detour to 100 Man Cave "in case". We continued our slow progress downstream for the rest of the day with no results. By the mid afternoon we had reached the intersection with Dex Creek and decided to start looking for a campsite due to the lateness of the day and the scarcity of flat ground.

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Air Niugini

Eventually we found an area that could pass as a campsite and spent a comfortable night.

On Sunday we followed revised instructions to proceed up Dex Creek as far as possible. Dex Creek was steeper than Ti-Willa and much more bouldery. We walked carefully and occasionally negotiated short waterfalls by very steep walking and scrambling. As we neared a taller waterfall, we noticed clothing and debris in the area. It had been there for quite a while and belonged to a couple of walkers. We surmised that the debris had been washed away in a flood from the regular Dex Creek campsite about one kilometre upstream and 200m in altitude higher. Consistent with BWRs procedures we radioed in the information and asked for instructions. We were told to proceed forward whilst a ranger was being flown in to investigate.

Going forward was problematical. The waterfall was dark, damp, slimy and dangerous. We checked a possible route on the true left, however it was exposed and one (likely) slip would have resulted in a major incident. Instead we started a long and steep scramble on the true right to negotiate the waterfall considerably higher and then descend back downstream to close the gap. Whilst scrambling upwards, the helicopter arrived and hovered, but due to the steep enclosing walls and the reverberation of the engine we were unable to communicate. The crew dropped a message and told us to stay put. A ranger was lowered who informed us that the body was above us at the edge of the waterfall.

Keith:

The deceased walker was sighted from the helicopter further up Dex Creek from Foxtrot. Many actions quickly followed. The Kanangra Walls

car park was closed off with Police barrier tape to exclude the general public and all media reporters. Previously the National Park had been closed but the general public were allowed to go to the lookouts at Kanangra Walls. The Police wanted to retrieve the deceased person, confirm identity and notify relatives so they could attend Kanangra Walls before any general media releases. A row of reporters and cameras formed at the barrier tape all hoping to eavesdrop somehow on activity at the search HQ (at the other end of the car park).

Conclusion

A big well done to all involved, Police Rescue, Police Command, Police radio technicians, SES, NP&WS, Ambulance SCAT and BWRs. The communications generally were exceptional particularly with the BWRs Operators at base. The use of helicopters made a big contribution to the search by getting personnel quickly to their search areas instead of days of walking.

BWRs were tasked into some tough areas and performed well. Teams Alpha, Bravo and Charley were self contained in the field for three days. Teams Echo and Foxtrot and base personnel also played a big part. Our personnel all worked well together and as teams.

In a lot of ways I would prefer that BWRs was called sooner as I believe that would give a better chance of finding a missing person alive. However, in this instance and at the Kedumba Search in December last year it is unlikely that there would have been a different outcome. A down side to being called out sooner is that we could drive to the site only to find that the missing person has been found, thus wasting our time and potentially getting employers off-side for no gain ♦

Bushwalking Training Courses

The Risk Management Framework provides the guidelines for the procedures to be followed to enable the risks involved in bushwalking and associated activities to be reduced and minimised and possibly prevented. By following these guidelines the activities will be undertaken safely and members will gain more enjoyment, and our bushwalking areas can be fully appreciated.

Clubs are responsible for ensuring that their activity leaders are competent in the levels of the skills required to lead those activities and that their activity members are competent in the levels of the skills required to participate in those activities. The levels of skills required depend on the degree of difficulty of

the activity. Activities vary in the degree of difficulty within Clubs and between Clubs. Confederation does not provide those skills or access to them. Rather, the sources of those skills are publicised and Clubs are encouraged to compare the training conducted and to share the training which is relevant to them.

If Clubs share their skill levels and encourage high levels of those skills then bushwalking activities will be more enjoyable and members will ask about the next activity. This will also encourage our principle of 'walk safely - walk with a club'. To further encourage this principle I will offer some suggestions in the next edition.

Chris Knight,
Confederation Training Officer

Bat guano — a corrigenda

An alien name slipped into last issue of The Bushwalker (Vol 32, Issue 3), where it could become a confusing and erroneous part of the historical record.

There is no such thing as "Batsch" Camp on the way to Yerranderie. The real name comes from my Gundungura map of the Kowmung Country. The correct name for the original camp there derives from bat shit. Bags of this guano were carried up from Colong Caves, and then from the camp carted out along the Oberon to Camden Stock Route for use as fertilizer. The Camden Stock Route was just a rough horse track in the early days.

In 1961 I named the base

camp there from the stories about the bat shit told to me by the late Neville Lang of "Bindook". But in polite society at that time one could not use the correct old English term.

Thus I used the colloquialism, using Batsh Camp for my Kowmung Country map, as published in the First Edition Classic. When later editions of the map were produced by members of the then Sydney University Rover-Scout Crew, they even had to remove Batsh as too rude. It was reduced to Bats, so strict were our moral guardians!!

Readers may read more from "Press On Regardless, 1996" (distributed in 1999) by looking at the on-line university archives at:

www.usyd.edu.au/bushwalking/archives/POR/Gundungura.html

Readers should note that the name Gundungara has a single r.

Geoff Ford



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Blue Gum Forest 75 years on

Andy Macqueen,
Springwood Bushwalking Club
and Friends of Blue Gum Forest

This year saw several major 75th anniversaries, including those for the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the ABC. But for bushwalkers, and the national parks movement, the ones that really counted were those of Blue Gum Forest, the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs and National Parks and Primitive Areas Council. These three entities are not unrelated. Blue Gum Forest was reserved on 2 September 1932 after a campaign by bushwalkers: they had paid the lessee who threatened the forest the sum of £130 (nearly \$20,000 today) to relinquish his lease, and they had persuaded the government to reserve the land.

The Federation had its inaugural meeting on 21 July 1932, and comprised representatives from nine bushwalking clubs. They were all fired up by matters of mutual interest – especially the protection of the natural areas they loved. The success

of the Blue Gum campaign had helped them to realise the value of organised action.

Meanwhile Myles Dunphy, similarly inspired by the success at the forest, and endeavouring to promote his vision for a huge Blue Mountains National Park and other parks in the state, was setting up the NPPAC. Indeed, the pedigree of today's National Parks and Wildlife Service—not to mention the parks themselves—can be traced back through the National Parks Association (50 years old this year) to the Federation and the NPPAC.

And so it was that nearly 200 people met in Blue Gum Forest on 2 September 2007 to celebrate its anniversary. The occasion, together with a photographic exhibition at the Govetts Leap Heritage Centre, was ably organised by Blue Mountains NPWS, assisted by volunteers representing the Friends of Blue Gum and the Confederation.

Most people walked to the forest, via the Perrys track. Several 'old-timer' bushwalkers and other personalities were flown in by helicopter, though they still had to walk a kilometre to the celebration site, crossing both Govetts Creek and the Grose.

The old-timers included Ron Woodhead, who was in

the forest in 1936 with Paddy Pallin and Myles Dunphy; David Roots, whose earliest memory is of being in a tent in the forest in about 1934, listening to campfire proceedings outside, and who was in the first party to scale the cliffs of Mount Banks; Allan Correy, who was in the first party to descend Mount Hay Canyon, and Jim Barrett, well known walker and historian.

Everyone was welcomed to the site by a group of young people (but not much younger than those who originally saved the forest) who had set up a re-creation of a 1930s camp, causing much curiosity.

Interest in the event far exceeded expectations. Many people would have liked to be present, but were turned away. The valley was still closed due to the controversial bushfire of November 2006, and the NPWS had set a limit and required pre-registration so as to properly manage the risks.

While past major forest anniversaries were essentially a shindig for bushwalking clubs, this one was far more inclusive. The majority present were not members of Sydney-based bushwalking clubs, but walkers and conservationists and Blue Mountains locals with a broader interest in the forest. Now that most of the 1930s walkers have passed away, the traditional clubs have, perhaps unknowingly, passed the Blue Gum baton on to the wider community.

Most importantly, there was the acknowledgment that the forest is Aboriginal traditional country. Auntie Carol Cooper welcomed the crowd on behalf of the Darug people and thanked the bushwalkers for their action in saving the place. Then Bob Debus, former local member and NSW environment minister, acknowledged the traditional owners and also thanked the bushwalkers. Wilf Hilder, Confederation president, spoke light-heartedly on behalf of the bushwalkers, while Ian Eddison of the Friends of Blue Gum talked about the role of volunteers in the forest and announced that the Friends would soon be regrouping for new efforts in the valley.

In introducing the 're-creation' group, MC Andy Macqueen also introduced their grandmother Flora Turton, and the tale was told about how she had taken her

mother to the forest in the 1940s. While pointing out that the bushwalkers had a way to go to compete with Darug people, Andy emphasised the importance of passing the forest story down through the generations.

Wilf Hilder and Ian Eddison cut a huge cake (brought in by helicopter!) and, after a resounding Happy Birthday was sung to the trees, all present gorged themselves accordingly. Then many accompanied Chris Tobin, Wyn Jones or Andy Macqueen to hear talks on Aboriginal culture, fire ecology or forest history, while others made an early start up the big climb.

It was a significant event not only for commemorating the forest action, but for Aboriginal reconciliation. The controversy surrounding the bushfire and the fears for the health of the trees were set aside, and a most pleasant and enriching day was had by all.

While past events such as the saving of Blue Gum may seem trivial in the light of current and future challenges for conservation, it is important that that we never lose sight of our heritage. In celebrating pivotal events of the past, we are reminded of the values we seek to protect, and recharged for the campaigns of the future ♦

Photos:

Top right: Crossing Grose: 1940s CMW member Flora Turton being assisted across the Grose River (Geoff Luscombe: DECC)

Bottom left: Group at big tree: Some of the celebrating walkers gathered at the 'Big Tree' (Paul Cardow: DECC)

Below: Hilder and Eddison: Confederation President Wilf Hilder cutting the 75th birthday cake with Friends of Blue Gum Forest representative Ian Eddison (Phillip Weir: DECC)



The Colong Foundation for Wilderness

Keith Muir

The Colong Foundation has campaigned for nearly 40 years to reserve wilderness areas, save old growth forests and protect National Parks from development and damage. Colong was formed in 1968 to prevent quarrying at Colong in the southern Blue Mountains. This year we celebrate the 20th year of the Wilderness Act and it is time to reflect on what has been achieved.

There are now 1.9 million hectares of wilderness reserved or almost a third of the national parks estate in NSW. The Wilderness Act has done a tremendous job for nature conservation and in reserving new park areas. Despite its critics, the Wilderness Act has protected many threatened forest areas through wilderness logging moratoria, environmental assessment and reservation implementing various Government wilderness policies. Wilderness captures the imagination by conjuring up spellbinding images of near-pristine environments and can rejuvenate the enthusiasm of jaded politicians.

During the forest battles of the late 1980s and 1990s, the landscape scale protection power of wilderness vastly improved the security of the Guy Fawkes, Washpool, Macleay Gorges, Mann, Chealundi, Cathedral Rocks, New England, Mummel Gulf, Barrington and

Nadgee areas. These forest struggles, through fought on a more scientific basis than in the past, revisited the battles for Blue Mountains wilderness in that those committed to the conservation ceaselessly pitted themselves against those wanting to exploit the environment.

There is another side to this story. Wilderness can be lost quickly. During the recent state election campaign, the Coalition parties signed an agreement with horse rider groups to give them access to wilderness areas and nature reserves. We could have lost nature-based park management because political parties thought wilderness was disposable.

This June the wilderness zone in Australia's largest national park, Kakadu, was abolished when a new plan of management was made. Only the Colong Foundation for Wilderness objected to the loss. The zoning of Kakadu National Park, including its wilderness zone, was done away with making the job of park development easier and less constrained.

In NSW the Department of Environment and Climate Change has no wilderness officers and its Wilderness Unit was disbanded years ago. The area of wilderness is almost as large as the entire State Forest estate but there are no formal representatives within the bureaucracy to

speak up for its appropriate management. The Colong Foundation is obliged to take up that job, as well as more public campaigning. We do our best.

Over the next few years wilderness will need the support of all its friends. The Colong Foundation for Wilderness will continue fight for wilderness, but our success depends on your support. Our challenges were enormous. They are global and ideological, while being regional and local in detail. Often saving wilderness comes down to a ridiculous one dimensional argument regarding vehicle access versus natural integrity.

In roads versus nature debates it is sometimes hard to remember that wilderness is our inspiration and key to understanding the natural world. It offers the essential lessons society must learn to survive in this changing world - humility and honouring something other than the human world. You can't understand that lesson from inside a four wheel drive vehicle, although many say you can. For wilderness to survive the priority for nature conservation should be for less fragmentation of large natural areas, less roads and more nature focused park management.

Those well funded and important wildlife corridors, Landcare and bush regeneration projects in more fragmented bush landscapes will fail unless there is something substantial of the natural world left to connect with. In the battle to save the bush, as in every battle, you must hold the centre or everything else falls apart ♦

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The Pilgrim trail to the Sacred Waterfall - Tibet

Alwyn Simple,
Watagan Wanderers

It was 8.30 am when our 18 seater bus pulled up outside our hotel in Dechin. It had seen better days and had we known the roads it was to travel we probably would not have got on it. Dechin is on the road to Tibet in what used to be Tibetan Shangrila before the area was taken over by China in 1959. It is now the last town in China before crossing the border into Tibet. Today it still maintains its Tibetan language and culture but it is occupied by China as part of their territory. We loaded our gear on the roof of the bus covering it with tarpaulins to try and keep it dry. Light drizzle was the forecast for the day and our hopes of seeing the Meili Snow Mountains were lost due to the weather conditions.

We headed a short distance out of town to Namkhatashi where we were supposed to have our first sight of the sacred Kawakarpo Mountain that rises 6740 metres above sea level. This place is sacred to Buddhist with several Stupas and shrines. Here our Buddhist Guides laid out prayer flags and burnt incense and Juniper branches while offering prayers to Buddha asking for a safe trip. The official formalities completed, we headed out along the road that was cut into the side of

the mountains and where landslides were common place. Several kilometres out we turned off this Road and descended down into the valley of the Mekong River. Before crossing the Mekong River we stopped at a checkpoint and registered our details including names, nationality and passport numbers. As we crossed the bridge over the Mekong, the driver turned the bus on to a small two-wheel track to the right that had been cut into the cliff face 40 metres above the swirling Mekong River. Large rocks blocked the road and two of our guides ran in front of the bus clearing them. The third guide and the cook stayed in the bus and started singing. In fact they were actually chanting and praying. To make things worse, the edges of the road were cracking and breaking away and the passengers on the side above the river were also praying. This so called road followed along above the Mekong slowly rising higher for around three kilometres before turning away from the river and entering a Tibetan village. We passed through this village and continued following a track along creek beds and along cliffs to the small village of Sitang. This village is only 12 kilometres from where we crossed the Mekong River and turned off but the experience of travelling this road could only be described as thrill seeking.



and another two on the top of the pass.

Having walked at 4200 meters a few weeks earlier, I was well aware of the need to carry oxygen when walking at this altitude. At the second teahouse on the way up to the pass, I was gasping for breath and the weight of my legs had increased to the point that they were difficult to lift to move forward. At this point I made the decision to open one of my oxygen canisters to assist me to make the top. The difference this made was great. Although the walking was still not easy, the breathing improved and my energy level increased relieving the pain of walking. The scenery on the way up had been restricted to the trail by the weather, but the misty and damp conditions did make it easier for climbing to the pass. Had the sun been out and the weather hotter it would have been even more energy draining on the body. The trail was lined with Rhododendrons, Pines, Birch and Oak as well as several other flowering plants. As we neared the top we entered an archway of prayer flags that ran several hundred metres to the highpoint on the pass where they spread out into the surrounding trees and fauna. From here the clouds would allow glimpses of the rugged peaks but never allowed a full panorama of the beauty of these mountains. We had to be patient and wait until Mother Nature was ready to display the views presently being hidden in the mist.

After resting at the top along with other travellers and packhorses, we started our descent into the valley below and the small village of Yuben where we were to spend the night at a guesthouse. We descended around 500 metres into the valley before we reached our destination. The culture in this area is totally different to Western Culture. As we entered the guesthouse a dead chicken was laying on the floor. We did not know if it had been killed for tonight's meal or had just died. An hour later it had disappeared and returned plucked and cleaned. No one ate

At Sitang we traded our bus for horses to carry our packs and the track continued on foot. This is the starting point for the Pilgrim Trail and it is 3000 metres above sea level. It is a 700 metre climb to the top of the pass, which is 3720 metres. We had been slowly working our way up to this height to acclimatise ourselves to this thin low oxygen air. There are two teahouses along the trail to the saddle



Mt Metsemo and the Five Wisdoms of Buddha

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chicken that night. Western toilets are unknown in this area and the use of Chinese and Tibetan toilets is not a pleasant experience.

Next morning the cloud had lifted from the mountains and we were treated to spectacular views. The Sacred Kawakarpo Mountain could not be seen from our guesthouse but his wife, Mount Metsomo stood proudly in front of us displaying all her beauty. The sun reflected from the white snow that cover the peak and ran down to form the glacier skirting the side of the mountain. Other snow-covered peaks were visible to the right of Metsomo, which formed part of the Meili Snow mountain Range.

After breakfast we set out dropping further down into the valley to cross a small stream that splits the village of Yuben. Our progress was temporally stopped while the local people knocked down a mudpack wall of a dwelling that had broken away from the main house and was leaning out towards the path. As we left the village we crossed a small open grassland with a stream running through it



Buddhist temple at the valley entrance

before entering the forest of birch and pine trees. We were now able to see the five snow covered peaks to the side of Mount Metsomo and these were called the Five Wisdoms of Buddha. The trail here was mainly level and followed the stream up the valley towards the base of Mount Metsomo and her neighbouring peaks. Part way along the trail, the river bed was covered in stone cairns known as chortens, built as dwellings for the dead where they stay for the period before they can move on to become reincarnated. Also in this area are gifts tied on the trunks of trees on strings with stones also attached to the bottom of the string for the Buddha to pull up to heaven. Money including coins and notes are also attached to the vertical rock faces in the area as a gift to the Buddha.

We came out of the forest on to an open grassland with a few scattered dwellings and some grazing yak and horses. At this point we were warned not to yell and make noises as the last people who had done this had died on the mountain in an avalanche. We crossed the grassland and started to climb the steep zigzag track to the waterfall. Part way up, a track branched off this main track and went to a Buddhist temple that had been built to enclose a sacred cave where Guru Padmasambhava was supposed to have meditated. The door of the temple opened into the cave and a Buddhist Nun attended the temple daily. Each night she returned to the village of Yuben as the spirits of

those who had died on the mountain still remained in the area. Buddhist people are deeply disturbed by spirits of the dead and this is why they always have a board across the bottom of the doorway. They believe that the dead walk by shuffling and they cannot lift their feet to step across obstacles. Our Tibetan Guides offered prayers here and we were asked by the Nun to respect the sacred waters of the waterfall.

As we continued to climb the track got steeper. Then just before the waterfall there is a level section that the stream runs through which had around twenty yak grazing in it. From here it was one short final climb to the base of the two waterfalls, which are said to come from the sacred mountain of Kawakarpo. These waterfalls are not very large but are two small streams of water dropping over the cliff around 20 metres apart. Looking up from the base they appear to come from the sky. The wind picks up the falling water and drifts it across the face of the cliff like a fine veil blowing in the breeze. The height at which this waterfall is located is 3770 metres above sea level. I must have acclimatised from the previous day as this time I was able to make the climb without the aid of oxygen. The trip back to the guest house in Yuben was a pleasant walk and we uncounted local people collecting firewood and carrying it back to their homes in large bundles tied on their backs. That evening most of us turned in early knowing we had to return across the saddle the next day.

Next morning was again fine but a cloud band had moved in covering the high peaks of the mountain. I was up early and heading outside when I discovered a mule in the kitchen eating the vegetables. I made a quick dash back to the room for my camera and took a few photos before I tried to send it on its way. It had no intention of leaving and backed up to me in a kicking position. There was a cane walking stick handy which changed its mind and it reluctantly left its newfound food stash.

After breakfast we set off once again for the pass across the mountains. The climb back to the top of the pass took just over two hours and we were rewarded with views of the sacred Kawakarpo Mountain on the way up. Thankfully the horses that are the only means of transport into and out of this valley carried the main

packs. The trek down the other side to the village of Sitang was easy compared to the climb up two days earlier. With the rain and mist gone we were able to see the nearby mountains through the openings in



Pack horses carried our supplies

the trees. When we arrived at Sitang our bus had not arrived so our guide had to arrange other transport to get us out. Some of our group took on the challenge to walk the 12 kilometres to the bridge across the Mekong River rather than drive in a vehicle along this road. However they never made it all the way before being picked up. We did make it back to the bridge safely, having completed the Pilgrim trail and we were ready to set off on our next adventure to the Mingyong Glacier. This adventure came to a sudden halt when a large landslide blocked the road. As a result we had to return to Dechin and spend the night in a local hotel ♦

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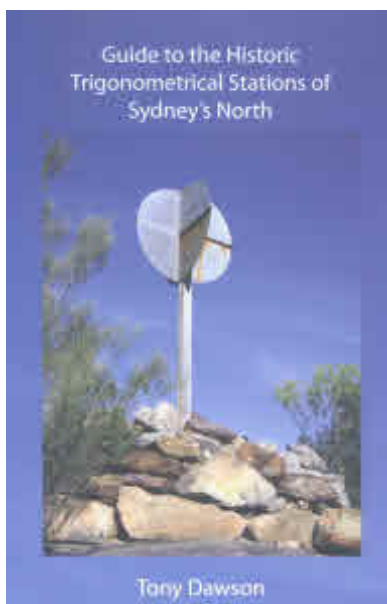
Book Reviews

"Guide to the Historic Trigonometrical Stations of Sydney's North"

Tony Dawson,

2007 ISBN 978-095 902 963-5

You have to be a bit of an enthusiast to go through all the hassles of publishing a book - some might say a 'nut case'. Well, the author Tony Dawson is certainly an enthusiast about trig stations. But it seems he managed to enthuse people from the Lands Dept, the State Library, the Seniors Group of the Institute of Surveyors, Arts NSW, the NPWS, and Pittwater Council,



as all these organisations have contributed to this book. Quoting from the back cover: 'The author, pictured here at Cliff trig in 2007, is a retired scientist whose first book on surveying history 'James Meehan - a most excellent surveyor' was published in 2004. He is a member of the Manly Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society ...' Well, what else do you do when retired?

Actually, I have to confess I found the book fascinating and

well-written. All bushwalkers like trig points (or trig stations): finding one tells us when we have actually got to a known point, even if the scrub around is so thick there aren't any views to be had! And this book covers the very hilly area of Sydney's north, which is convenient for day walks to so many walkers.

The book is more than a listing of the trig points. The first half of the book starts with the history of the surveying of the Sydney region right from the First Fleet. I found it fascinating to find the sources

of many well-known place names, coming from the people involved. The author quotes Assistant Surveyor Govett, who was not able to get himself issued a horse for his work. 'In consequence of my not having a pack horse, there will be many a day I shall have to wander with blankets on my back, and many a night to trust to the generosity of the weather, for my rest, which inconveniences ought, if they could be avoided' ... 'but I content myself however, with this consideration that the less I have under my care, the less I have to answer for.' Modern lightweight bushwalking!

The first half then goes on to explain about the later more serious surveying process and how the surveys were done. Did you know that the metal plug you sometimes find at a trig point in the rock is called a Munz plug, and they were stuck in with molten sulfur? (Some of the anchors on Carlons Chains were stuck in the same way.) And some of the huge cairns you find today at the trig points were erected back around 1880!

The second half of the book lists most of the trig stations

known, conveniently grouped by area. It is hard to avoid planning a few day walks when you read this section, just to go and check out the trigs. Well, my wife and I did just that, out past Cole and Edwards to Taffys Rocks near Cowan, with a view onwards to Cliff. There's a photo of the author at Cliff on the back cover, by the way, and the trig is clearly visible from Taffys

Rocks. There are also unlisted trig points still to be found, apparently put in to assist the surveyors but never given official status.

The book can be obtained from the Manly Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society, PO Box 695, Manly NSW 1655 with an RRP of \$16.50 excluding P&P. It can also be obtained by contacting dragdawson@hotmail.com.

"Back from the Brink"

Blue Gum Forest and the
Grose Wilderness
— Second Edition

ISBN 978 064 647 695 7

Andy MacQueen

(With acknowledgement to The Colong Bulletin, where the original review was published.)

It's ten years since Andy MacQueen launched his book 'Back from the Brink'. It gained immediate popularity, being a fascinating and comprehensive account not only of Blue Gum Forest — arguably the Cradle of Conservation in NSW — but of the whole Grose Wilderness. On the one hand there were the bushwalkers, canyoners and conservationists who loved the place, but on the other hand there were the railway and dam builders and the miners and loggers who threatened it. With the 75th anniversary of the reservation of Blue Gum Forest being celebrated this year, Andy decided to produce a second edition. All the material from the first edition is there, with a few corrections, embellishments and some additional photographs.

Thanks to careful research of Alan Rigby's photo archives by his son Roger Rigby, new evidence has come to light about the makeup and activities of Rigby's Easter 1931 party — the party that came across Hungerford and his axe. It was not an all-male party at all.

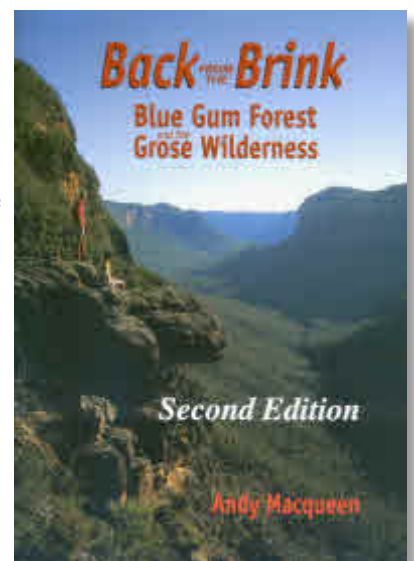
More importantly, there is a whole new section entitled 'New Climates', which contains three chapters dealing with events of the last ten years. Those events include not only the Wilderness declaration and

World Heritage listing, but also some less welcome phenomena. It has not been railways and dams that have brought Blue Gum and the Grose to the brink of destruction, but private sanctuary promoters, film companies and, most recently, the dubious management of a major bushfire.

Given the essentially celebratory nature of the first edition, it must have been a challenge for Andy to maintain that tone in the face of those recent somewhat depressing events. However, he appears to have done it. The book begins with an author's preface which describes the complex nature of issues now

facing the management of reserves and concludes with an inspirational quote from Sue Morrison about the area's unique eucalypt ecosystems and outstanding wilderness. Frankly, I found the whole book fascinating. It is not the sort of book I could just sit down and read straight through: there is far too much there for that. I highly recommend it.

Published by the author, RRP \$39.95, available from some bookshops or from andymacqueen@gmail.com



Cliff Trig from Taffys Lookout





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



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