The Bushwalker

Camp above Bluff Tarn,
Kosciusko National Park

Volume 33
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Spring 2008

Don't you wish you were here?

Rolling Grounds above Whites River Hut, Kosciusko National Park

Photo: Bruce McKinney

Contributions of interesting, especially typical and spectacular bushwalking photos are sought. you don't want the same photographers all the time, do you?

What's for Dinner?
Riley's Paddock, west of Finchley Trig, Yengo National Park

Photo: David Morrison

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The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc represents approximately 66 Clubs with a total membership of about 8,700 bushwalkers.

Formed in 1932, the Confederation provides a united voice on behalf of all bushwalkers on conservation, access and other issues.

People interested in joining a bushwalking club may write to the Confederation Administration **admin@bushwalking.org.au** for a list of Clubs, but a far more useful 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, including the bushwalking FAQ.

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Please indicate which issue you want your subscription to start with. We don't want to duplicate copies you already have.

From the editor's desk. . .

Well, we have several articles on safety this time. There's one from Keith Maxwell of the BWRS about the need to let people know where you are when you need rescuing. It can be a bit hard to find you otherwise. There's another, rather shocking in a way, from Michael Keats of The Bush Club, about live ammunition and chemical warfare shells from WW II hidden near Lithgow. He is hoping that a bit of publicity might persuade the Defence Dept to clean up its act. Finally, there's one from the Editor on 'When Things Go Wrong', which shows just how powerful nature can be in the mountains, and emphasising that there is a time for any of us when retreat is the smart and only option. We don't want dead heroes.

Articles for Publication

Clubs and members are encouraged to submit relevant articles, with a very strong preference for those with good pictures. Both the author and the author's club will feature in the Byline - this is a good way to advertise YOUR club. 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 won't be published. 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

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Saint Helena Crater,

Blue Mountains National Park

Peter Miller,
Brisbane Waters Outdoors Club

Saint Helena Crater, near Glenbrook in the Blue Mountains, played a significant part in conservation and bushwalking history. Off the radar for many years, the crater now has a huge weed problem. A plan has been set in motion to fix it, but it needs your help, and your club's help.

The Blue Mountains National Park is a short walk from where I grew up. The Park was a comfort, a refuge, an unending source of adventure and solitude; and intimately tied to my family history. My grandfather's tales of bush walks long ago (my grandfather was Bert Pelham, of the Warrigal Club) had me haring off to

StHelena, Circa 1933. B&W hand tinted. A. H. Pelham collection. (see person in centre foreground for scale)

places where bushwalkers in the past had become lost for days at a time. Somehow, without a topo map, and with the barest of directions, remote and beautiful places were visited and appreciated, without ever once arriving home overdue.

One of the places I remember most fondly was Saint Helena Crater. It was beautiful. Picture green grass, with tall white columns of gums reaching up, branchless for many metres, to support a green cathedral ceiling with gnarly organic arches. The dappled shade covered lush grass groomed by wombats and kangaroos. No matter where you camped in the crater the views were picturesque and serene. Saint Helena Crater was not especially difficult to reach by the mid 1970s, but not frequently visited, either.

Saint Helena Crater is an extinct volcanic vent. It was described a century ago (1908) by J.E. Carne in 'Geology and Mineral Resources of the Western Coal Fields' as 'A semi-circular basin of an area of about 30 acres lying about 325 feet below the surrounding plateau sandstone level. Filling largely tuffaceous. Olivine basalt at lowest point exposed by drainage channel which has sawn through the sandstone rim and removed the neck filling to a depth over 300 feet. Well grassed forest land, its presence unsuspected, even at a short distance.'

In the early 1930s bushwalking was becoming popular. Saint Helena country was a favoured destination with the Warrigal Club. Around 1937 certain Warrigals set about applying for a lease of Saint Helena Crater. It was learned that if representations were made for the dedication of 100 acres around the crater, there was every expectation of success. It was hoped that the proposed crater reservation should be the nucleus of a larger National Park.

'Saint Helena Crater was granted by the terms of a permissive occupancy to the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs around April 1941. Over 100 acres surrounding the crater were granted. It was reported in April 1941 that the area was pioneered by the Warrigal Club amongst bushwalkers [and that the crater] is an attractive and unique feature from the point of view of geological and botanical study and the [lease] will permit of some control being exercised over it to prevent spoilation and destruction of these special features.

The ultimate goal of the Warrigal Club was realised when the Blue Labyrinth was gazetted as part of the Blue Mountains National Park in 1959.'

Cameron, B., (1992) 'A History of the Blue Labyrinth'.
[*Used with permission.*]

Saint Helena Crater was a popular destination for bushwalkers in the era before cars, when proximity to railway stations was essential. Many clubs, including the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, held annual reunion trips at Saint Helena Crater, often over the October long weekend.

In the 50s with the motor car bushwalkers were able to go further afield. Saint Helena Crater saw fewer and fewer vistors, perhaps because it was too easy with the new fire trails, or tired and overworked in the eyes of trip leaders. Whatever the reason, in a few short decades its popularity faded.

The harm the Warrigals feared was from loggers and cattlemen, and this they managed to prevent. A worse fate was not imagined, but has come to pass. Carried in the bowels of foxes, blackberries invaded the crater in the 1990s.

'Blackberry is a Weed of National Significance. It is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its invasiveness, potential for spread, and economic and environmental impacts. Blackberry has invaded the banks of watercourses, roadsides, pastures, orchards, plantations, forests and bushland throughout temperate Australia. [...] Blackberries also affect tourism, reducing the natural attraction of the bush and hindering recreational activities where thickets prevent access to natural features.'

From www.weeds.gov.au

The blackberry is not harmed by bush-fires; indeed it thrives after a fire. The 2002 January fires devastated the Blue Mountains National Park, and Saint Helena Crater was not spared. With all of the native plants dead or dormant, the blackberry went crazy. Today, the entire floor of the crater, all of the rich volcanic soil, all thirty acres, is covered by blackberry thickets. These thickets are too dense to walk through, you must retreat back to the sandstone and its sandy soils to go around.

There are some open grassy areas on the north western side which appear to be each centered on a wombat burrow. These grass foraging areas are not pristine, however: they are infested with Cobblers Pegs, Bidens pilosa. Ironically, the few wombats that survived the fire (it raged, unstoppable, for several days) may have been saved from starvation by the quick growing fresh blackberry shoots.

Far from a wilderness jewel, the Saint Helena Crater of today is an ugly brown scab. There are standing skeletons of trees which did not survive the 2002 fire. There are fallen trees and dropped branches

St. Helena, July 2008, P Miller

everywhere, mounded over by blackberry. The few surviving trees have few limbs and very thin crowns. These proud gums have few saplings. The watercourses are choked with blackberry. The old dam is a fetid swamp, surrounded by more skeletons, more reminiscent of an Adams Family water feature than an idyllic picnic spot. Even the green swathes of bracken, scattered all about the crater, are misleading, as every one of them is laced with blackberry, just waiting to ensnare the unsuspecting bushwalker.

A Call to Arms

Conservationists before the word was coined, and Green before the word had a capital letter, the foresight of that early Federation of Bushwalking Clubs board and membership 67 years ago left us a shining and beautiful legacy. One which today, 50 years after they thought it safe forever, is tarnished and battered. Will we, in our turn, leave a legacy to be treasured? Your help is urgently needed to restore Saint Helena Crater to its former state. It is not sufficient to simply spray the weeds and consider the job as done. This will only result in a different crop of weeds. To restore Saint Helena Crater will take many years of careful bush regeneration. Yes, it will kill the blackberries and the cobblers pegs, but those will be side effects of restoring the crater's natural balance of plant communities, not goals in themselves.

As bushwalkers we often see ourselves as separate from bush regeneration; we go where the land is unspoiled and wild. As bushwalkers we often see weeds in National Parks as a NPWS problem, or a local council problem, because we pay our taxes and council rates, and surely some of them pay for rangers to pull weeds. As bushwalkers we often see bush regeneration as recreational weeding, an urban hobby, nothing to do with our real bush.

Saint Helena Crater needs bush regeneration. There are too many such sites scattered across the Blue Mountains National Park, and only a handful of rangers and volunteers to deal with it. The reality is that Saint Helena Crater will not be regenerated without volunteers. Those volunteers can't come from urban bush regenerators: they are already fully occupied in their local urban areas. They can't come from the local council staff or the NPWS: they are already fully occupied on other environmental disaster areas. It has to come from us, bushwalkers who want to visit remote and beautiful places, people who already know to carry out their garbage, folks who can see the jewel beneath the scab.

'But why should I care about a place I don't use?' Saint Helena Crater was, and can be again, an excellent introduction to overnight camping for beginners. Expert navigators are no longer needed to venture into this part of the Blue Labyrinth, but it's a good place to practice navigation skills. It was, and can be again, a beautiful place to spend a lazy weekend. And you can still get there from a railway station.

We need working-bees of 4 to 8 people twice a year, in spring and in autumn, to walk in to the crater (3 hours from Glenbrook Station), spend two days tackling the problem, and walk out again. You don't have to be qualified in bush regeneration. We will approach NPWS to pay for professional bush regeneration trainers to accompany the teams, as they do in some other areas. ['Willows out of Wollemi' run by 'Friends of the Colo' comes to mind - Ed.]

Eight people is not many, but this will go on for at least ten years. The point of recruiting clubs is the social aspect. So how about it — is your club prepared to put Saint Helena Crater working-bees on its official calendar, to work with other clubs on the working-bees? When the job is done, does your club want the satifaction of having restored a significant piece of bushwalking heritage?

St Helena, April 1994, B Cameron

Our Plan

In concert with NPWS we have formed a 'Friends of Saint Helena Crater' bush care group. The necessary NPWS paperwork is in progress. Club size doesn't matter: it is likely that several clubs will need to be involved. We will have working-bees twice a year, spring and autumn. We will stick with it, for as many years as it takes until the cathedral once again stands serene. We want to leave a legacy as significant as the one left to us.

We have started our working bees already.

For 2008:

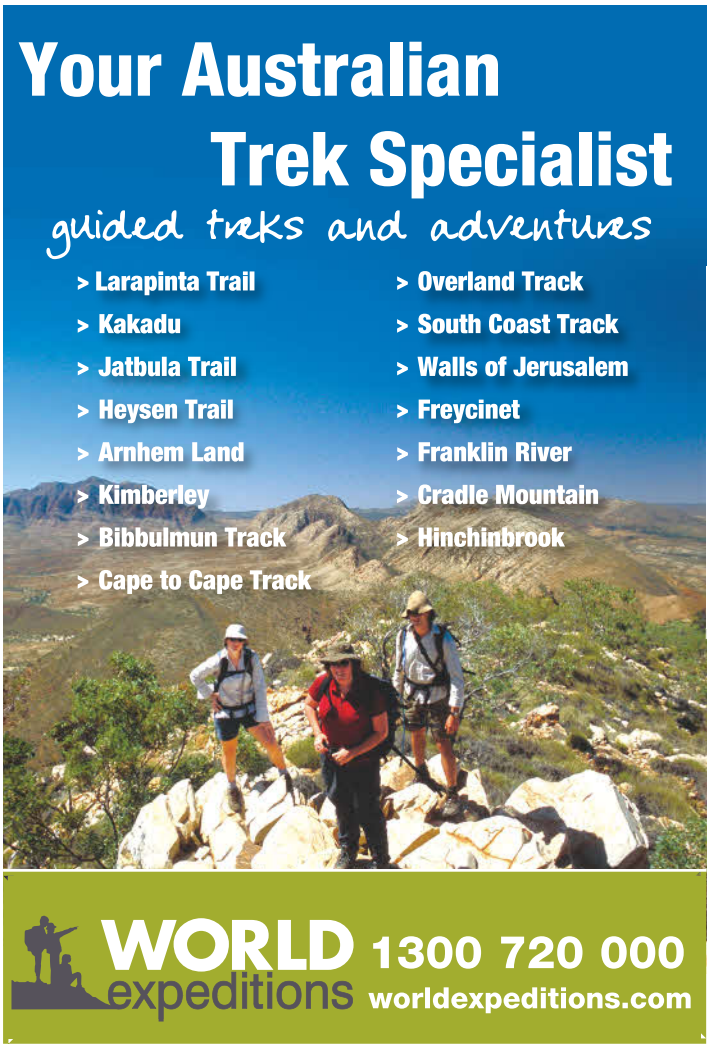
July	Sat 26, Sun 27, Completed
September	Thu 11, Completed
September	Sat 27, Sun 28, Completed
October	Sat 11, Sun 12, Confirmed in planning

For 2009 we are planning:

March	Sat 21, Sun 22, Not confirmed Autumn
April	Sat 18, Sun 19, Not confirmed Autumn
September	Sat 11, Sun 12 , Not confirmed Spring
October	Sat 10, Sun 11, Not confirmed Spring

There is more information available on the web site:
http://miller.emu.id.au/pmiller/st_helena/
[A lot more information, with maps of weed distribution etc - Ed.]

You can contact Peter Miller by email:
millerp@canb.auug.org.au



Marangaroo - what can go wrong

If you go out in the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise...

Michael Keats,
The Bush Club

This story is not about the Teddy Bear's Picnic but something rather more sobering. This is a true story of how two bushwalkers became embroiled in a saga involving Australia's Chemical Warfare history of WWII. It is a story of duck shoving and detective work …

While crafting walks for the Bush Club 2008 Autumn program, I pulled out a copy of the latest (2006) 1:25,000 topographic map of Lithgow. Amongst other iconic localities it includes a reference to the "Lost City" – top pagoda country. Whilst most bush walkers are content with a single visit to this site, what fascinated me was the knotted complexity of contours in several discrete groups that lay to the west. I had already ventured into the country to the east of the Lost City and I had a gut feel that these as yet unexplored contoured pagoda groups would be a challenge.

Exploratory walking took on a whole new meaning as a result of our trip into the complex ravine and canyon system north of Marrangaroo Creek, flanking the ridge extension track off the Beecroft Fire Trail after it crosses the 66 kV power line at GR 350 019. We parked the vehicle at GR 357 005. It was a bracing 9 C – ideal walking conditions. There was an old track on the eastern side at GR 358 005 that seemed promising. We clambered down to about GR 358 007. The pagodas were fantastic and the creek was accessible. It was however so scrubby that we turned to each other and said 'no way' and hauled ourselves back up the side of the canyon and headed a bit further south.

Again the pagodas were fantastic, and we found a fine ramp alongside the base of a line of them, which went down and down, somewhere around GR 360 004. The last bit of the ramp seemed to end in a 4 m drop, but after some scouting among the greenery a way down was found that did not even require a tape assist. It was perfect.

The river-level cave

Once down a whole new world was revealed - a huge, magic, dry cave with a soft sandy floor - one of the largest I have seen. The ceiling was a good 3 m above the floor. Both were flat and gave the cave the appearance of a real room. A wall of tree ferns some 30m in length curtained the opening. Not in your dreams would you imagine a cave like this one. Lots of pictures and then it was time to move outside into a world of pagodas.

Then it was down into the creek with some scrub bashing on the way. Generally, walking/wading in the creek was the easiest option. Most of the time the water was only ankle deep and after about ten minutes you did not feel the cold water – you did not feel anything!

We had morning tea at GR 360 998 on a rock next to a notched stump where in times past timber getters had cut magnificent specimens of red stringy bark. The notches, stark testimony to the loggers who stood on boards precariously as they wielded axes or two- handed saws - we observed both styles. The average felled tree had a girth in excess of 1m at head height. What disappointed us most was the number of huge trees that had been felled and then left to rot because they were hollow inside.

At 11:43 we crossed the Marrangaroo Creek at GR 358 991 and then picked up an old road that on the map winds its way up Marangaroo Creek for over 5 km. After observing the high cliffs to the north we started walking down the road. Imagine our surprise when we came across a collection of rusting steel boxes. These were not just any old boxes. These were ammunition boxes, some 1000 x 500 x 250 mm. A panel inside had 6 regular 100 mm diameter holes. Each hole could have supported one 25 pound artillery shell. The closure for each container had a rubber seal and two large locking screws. Two rectangular handles allowed for ease of carrying between two troops. Each box was dated 1943.

It was then we saw the sign. It said clearly for anyone approaching up the valley – "Contamination Area – Keep Out." It was quite clear that the authorities never envisaged anyone entering the valley the way we had come. We took lots of photos and had a good look around. Even though the area looked untouched, it had been cleared (or fired?) a long time ago. Without further thought we kept heading down the road. I wanted to follow the map and cross the Marrangaroo Creek and explore another fascinating ravine on the western side of where the vehicle was parked. At 12:05 we came across a major road junction, GR 353 992. There was evidence of recent heavy machinery use. We crossed the Marrangaroo Creek here - it was dirty with what appeared to be a red brown algae.

The road continued and showed evidence of recent earthworks. After about 400 m it was deliberately blocked to vehicles by a large felled tree. We clambered over it and kept on the road. I picked up an odd piece of threaded plastic with a stainless steel swivel with a sign on it "do not fill." I decided to do the right thing and remove it from the bush: it did not belong here, it was litter. Then I picked up a piece of iron. It also had thread work and was horribly distorted. It was a bomb fragment. Further on I picked up a piece of what I thought was a firing pin. We photographed these pieces and left them.

Finally we came around a bend to be confronted by padlocked gates, barbed wire and many signs – all blank facing our side. We crossed over the gate and then all was revealed. The main sign said, "Danger Military Range Boundary - Live

Ammunition cases from 1943

Firing Do Not Enter", "Laser Hazard" and "Live Bombs." The most frequent sign proclaimed, "Australian Government Land -Trespassing on this land is prohibited, Commonwealth Crimes Act, 1914 –1973, Section 89." The ultimate message was a crisp, new red flag flying on a pole. There was absolutely no indication coming from the east side that we were infringing the law. There is no indication on the topographic map that this range exists. All that the map advises is that the area is part of the Newnes State Forest. We were flabbergasted, so much so that we forgot to get a GPS reading. After finding more spent ordnance up the road we went back and took a reading at the gate, GR 349 000. What an adventure!

We pushed on to the point where the road crossed a tributary of the Marrangaroo Creek. More surprises ensued. Here we found a lot of khaki-painted metal cylinders that could have easily held Howitzer shells (105 mm?). The cylinders were 110 mm or so in diameter and about 1000 mm long. They were stuck in the creek at odd angles. We also spied pieces of pressed metal used for forming air-strips or roads over sandy ground, rusting food containers and much more. We returned to the track that now showed signs of being used by motorbikes. All along the way we picked up, noted and replaced pieces of spent ordnance, even though we were way outside the designated firing range boundary.

The boundary gates - facing the wrong way for Michael

The track was a good one, and wound its way up a truly spectacular valley with great pagodas and increasing cliffs. At GR 350 007 pulled off the track onto a pagoda to have lunch. The views are special and once the edge was off our hunger we started looking for ways up, and ways down – pagodas get to you like that. What we did find was by now no surprise - a part of an exploded shell about 2 m away on a pagoda. It was part of a shell casing, twisted and deformed by the force of the explosion. We were by now over 2 km from the firing range gate. Either someone is very incompetent with a 25 pounder gun or the fallout area is a lot bigger than the authorities realise, or…

As I predicted to Steve, the bike track joined up with the road we had driven out on at GR 352 010. We were back at the vehicle at 1405.

Back at home I just had to pursue the mysteries arising from the walk. Where had we been? Why were the topographic maps, even back to1936 (the club library has a full set) not showing any land reserved for defence purposes? Did Forests NSW know that their workers or contractors could disturb and explode old ordnance? How extensive is the area where unexploded ordnance could still be about? These and dozens more questions needed answers.

My first enquiry was to LPI. How come the latest 2006, 1:25,000 topographic map of Lithgow could fail to show such a significant site as a live bombing range? It appears that the Crown (Department of Defence in this case) has no obligation to disclose land it has appropriated for any purpose to the State or any other authorities. Transparency in Government? Stephen Peacock, HR/Business Services Manager, Land & Joint Systems, Thales Australia (formerly known as the Lithgow Small Arms Factory) confirmed I had stumbled across a Defence Facility and referred me to M.StC. Mark Walton, Non-Defence Training Area Manager, Joint Operations Support Staff, NSW. We had an interesting discussion about how vandals knocked off fencing and signage and he indicated the possibility of provided a map showing the approximate boundaries of the Bombing Range…

Brian Fox sent me an extract of part of the Lithgow Sheet as a cadastral plan showing Lot 10/DP87273 - apparently reserved to the Commonwealth. When plotted out onto the topographic sheet the northern boundary is about 2 km south of where the range is. More questions! An unlikely break though came from another member of the Bush Club, Tony Mitchell, who has a friend interested in old trains. The May 2008 issue of Australian Railway History has an article on the old tunnels at Glenbrook and at Marrangaroo, west of Lithgow. Surprise! Both localities were used to store mustard gas and other chemical weapons that the RAAF had imported from England in the form of bombs in the early part of World War II.

When the Japanese midget submarines attacked Sydney Harbour the attack caused a panic at the Marrangaroo depotwhich housed a lot of munitions, not just mustard gas. Apparently they received instructions 'to evacuate all the munitions from the depot and hide them in the rough country behind'. And that is very rough country indeed. Such was the rush to clear everything out of the depot that no one kept accurate records of where various loads of munitions were dumped and when it came time to recover the hidden bombs etc not everything could be found. Quite a few of the chemical warfare weapons were never recovered because no one could remember where they had been hidden.

So some bombs and chemical weapons may still be out there, and the area where the munitions depot once stood has become much more populated than it once was. Secrecy all around! Now I want to know where the tunnels are! But there is more. Cameron Dobson, Acting Regional Manager, Forests NSW provided a map and asked me to identify the area of interest. My questions to him are when did this section of Crown Land become State Forest? Is he aware of the Bombing Range? Are his workers and contractors safe?

Even more fortuitous is the release of a book by Geoff Plunkett entitled 'Chemical Warfare in Australia'. It raises rafts of questions. Frustratingly, but not unexpectedly it does not include any useful maps. It does have great pictures, particularly of the hoax town that was built near Marrangaroo to try and disguise activities. The book includes hair-raising accounts of handling chemical weapons and disturbing graphic pictures of the damage that mustard gas does to the human body.

On 19th June Kevin Cuthbertson, E.O.D. Department of Defence, contacted me. He was very helpful and suggested I make direct contact with the caretaker of the Defence facility at Marrangaroo, Neil Hutchinson. If a visit did not resolve my questions, I was to call him back and arrange a walk through the facility with him, retracing the walk that Steve and I did along the old road. I raised with Cuthbertson the issue of trail bike riders creating tracks in an area that is liberally scattered with spent ordnance and possibly ageing unexploded ordnance as well, outside the apparent hazard zone. His response was almost one of despair implying that dealing with trail bike riders was beyond his capacity. I wonder what happens when someone is seriously injured or worse … who will be running for cover?

I met with Neil on site near the famous hoax town 'Ryans Hotel'. True to their word the Army released to me a map overlaid on the current Lithgow topographic sheet showing the boundaries of what must be regarded as sensitive no-go walking area. But you would never know from the LPI topo map.

The following article comes from the Daily Telegraph later in the year, after Michael started digging.

Pagoda country - the original goal

Chemical bombs sit metres from Lithgow families for 60 years

A HORDE of deadly chemical weapons untouched for 60 years has been uncovered just 100 m from unsuspecting residents. Imported during World War II as part of a top-secret program, dozens of 250-pound (113 kg) bombs containing deadly phosgene were buried less than 100 m from private properties at Marrangaroo, near Lithgow. The bombs were only re-discovered after 84-year-old retired chemical weapons armourer Geoff Burn blew the whistle, identifying the site on an aerial map.

'We dug this big trench to hold about 32 bombs, so it was pretty extensive, and just buried them in there' Mr Burn said. 'They didn't tell us why they were being buried, but I am certain they were still full of phosgene gas.'

The Department of Defence confirmed the claim, recovering several empty bombs before engaging specialist contractors capable of safely removing the remaining weapons.

Nearby residents were shocked when Defence officials told them the deadly chemicals had been stored on the site for over 60 years. Marnell Banning, a mother of four who has lived near the site for eight years, said the find was a real concern. "I am glad they are finally doing something about it but we would like them to fully investigate the site to make sure there are no more bombs there," she said.

Three Peaks Walk, Shoalhaven

Paul Ellis
Shoalhaven Bushwalkers

Last July I joined up with 23 other members of the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers for the Three Peaks Walk near Coolendel, west of Nowra. The walk was led by Sue, and was billed as 'Past Her Peak' as Sue hadn't led the walk for many years. The walk is a club classic and certainly on my list as one of the 5 best day walks in the Shoalhaven district. The weather couldn't have been better for the walk: sunny, clear skies, but quite cool.

The unsealed road followed the cliff line above the Shoalhaven River before heading inland along the side of the ridge and past the old abandoned Grassy Gully gold mines. I arrived at the small parking area (once a campsite) at 9.35am, just 5 minutes before the rest of the walking party arrived from Nowra. We set off almost immediately, heading northwards along the unsealed road towards Coolendel, ascending gradually to an intersection. Straight ahead is signposted to Coolendel and the camping area on the Shoalhaven River. We turned left and followed Yalwal Creek Road as it climbed to Moffatt Saddle. Despite the cold morning air, the climb was steep enough to have several of our group removing their fleeces.

Just past Moffatt Saddle we turned off the road onto a narrow track on the left which climbed steadily through the burrawangs until suddenly we were faced with a very steep 50 metre climb onto the ridge top. I still have vivid memories of scrambling up here on my previous two visits, my lungs screaming for more air and my leg muscles tightening up like an archer's bow as we scrambled up, almost on our hands and knees on the very steep loose gravel covered slope. It was much the same this time around.

At the ridge top my legs felt like jelly as I caught my breath and enjoyed the 360 degree views. I could look down onto the Shoalhaven River and across to Mount Scanzi. I could look west across the Yalwal Creek Valley towards the Ettrema wilderness while to the east I could look down onto the Burrier Sand Quarries. We sat down in the sun and enjoyed morning tea. Only a few still wore their fleece jackets.

After morning tea we headed south along the ridge top towards Grady Hill. The track is narrow: the ridge slopes down on either side. The track descended to a small open saddle before ascending steeply once again. An approximate 50 metre gain in height over a small distance, though not as steep as the previous climb. Once near the top the ridge flattened out as it passed by several rocky outcrops, then over to an open area just below the top of Grady Hill.

We were standing near what I remembered to be a narrow pass onto the top of Grady Hill, a route we had taken in 2001. I remembered that in 2003 we had missed this pass and continued around the base of the cliff line. Sue was keen to repeat the 2003 route, but she let me lead a small group across the top while she led the rest along the base of the cliff line. Next to a hollow cave-like feature is a narrow

Checking out the pass off the southern end of Grady Hill

chute that can be scrambled up onto the top. It's much easier than it looks and soon we were standing at the top. The top of Grady Hill is covered in light forest and there is very little undergrowth, so the going was very easy.

At 100 metres we came to another pass which looked very simple to climb, just as Sue and the rest of the group arrived below us. They decided to join us on top of Grady Hill. There was one section that was difficult so I scrambled down to give several of the group a hand in climbing up.

Grady Hill is very narrow here and the eastern cliff line gave us some great views across the Shoalhaven. We could pick out Coolangatta Mountain, Browns Mountain and even Nowra Hill in the distance. Another view included the plateau near the Old Burrier Fire Trail to the south where we normally get great views of this very site. We made our way south across the top to the southern edge to the pass back down to the track. We had no trouble finding it, but first we stepped onto the rock platform to take in more views to the south which included our next objective, Hanson Hill.

The descent is narrow and a little steep, but if you tread carefully and use all hand and footholds there shouldn't be a problem. The hardest part of the descent was the dead fallen tree at the bottom. Once on the track we again descended to another saddle, then ascended to below Hanson Hill where we had another rest stop. You can drop packs here and climb to the top of the hill for more views. I decided to stay behind with the group that didn't want to go up as I'd been there on a previous hike.

Soon everyone was back down and we set off, again following the faint track to Mt Barron. The track initially descends quite

Bundundah Trig on the southern tip of Mt Barron

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Descending the pass off Mt Barron

steeply. Once we reached the saddle we started another steep climb to the base of the cliff line on Mt Barron. The track here is less than defined, but if you head for the highest point of the ridge you can't go wrong. About halfway up the ascent I turned around to get a great view of both Hanson and Grady hill to the north, a rare sight without the bulk of My Barron in the way.

There are two routes through the cliff line onto the top of Mt Barron. The hardest, which includes a scramble up a rock chimney, is very close to the north eastern end of Mt Barron. I suggested that those who would prefer the easier pass to the top follow me westward below the cliff line for about 50 metres. A few minutes later I was quite surprised when I turned around and found everyone else, bar Alf had decided to follow me!

My calculations were a little out: we seemed to have followed the cliff line for closer to 100 metres and we were still not close the pass I wanted. My excuse was a 5 year hiatus between walks that always seems to shorten the distance in your memory. I'd say it's closer to 150 metres and by then I was starting to worry I might have bypassed the spot. However, after scrambling through a section of thick undergrowth and loose rocks we arrived at the bottom of the pass I was looking for. I scrambled up to check it out. Halfway up I recognised the large rock stuck in the middle of the narrow passage that we would need to negotiate and once over that I could see the cairn at the top of the pass. Suddenly Alf was on the rock above me calling everyone up. I dropped my pack near the top then returned to the middle of the pass to help everyone else scramble up over the difficult section.

Approaching the ascent to Grady Hill from the saddle

We had lunch on the rocks just above the pass. Here we had great views to the north of the Shoalhaven River Valley and we could look down onto the twin hills of Hanson and Grady. After lunch we made our way across the rocks to the NE point for more views, then south through the forest of eucalypts and burrawangs to the southernmost point of Mt Barron and Bundundah Trig. The trig is still in very good condition compared to many others of this type found in the wilderness areas of the Shoalhaven. The cairn of rocks still holds a tall wooden post at the top of which is a complete metal trig vane. Theses trigs are usually in bad state of repair with the wooden posts burned by bushfires and the vanes broken and scattered around the site. The usual trig photographs were taken prior to taking a look at the views from the southern end of the mountain which included the plateau to the south and Durkin Spur.

We now headed back northwards, keeping close to the eastern cliff line to locate another pass down to the forest below the cliff line. We didn't have far to go, though several were fooled by a false descent that ended with a steep drop too dangerous to contemplate for some of this group. The pass we were looking for was just a little further north. It was steep and loose, but there were plenty of hand and footholds. At the bottom we realised we were a few short. Tony climbed back up the pass to locate our missing group which turned out to be a couple of photographers around a burrawang with two very distinct pineapple-shaped seed pods. Admittedly a rare find, especially at this time of year, but ...

We scrub bashed our way around the base of the cliffs to below the southern tip of Mt Barron and located the track down to Banfora Saddle. This track is just as steep as the descent from Hanson Hill and once again trekking poles were put to good use to steady the feet and knees on the loose surface. The descent seemed to take ages but eventually we reached the knoll on the northern side of Banfora Saddle. We turned left here and descended the thickly forested ridge to Grassy Gully Creek.

There wasn't much of a track here and Sue tried

Climbing through the pass onto Mt Barron

to take us through the more open country - without success. It was like walking through a forest of hakea, the thorny bushes getting their spines through the toughest trouser material. By the time we reached the creek we were thinking up new inventions for thorn proof bushwalking trousers. We followed the mostly dry and stony creek bed for a short to an old four wheel drive track (more like a foot track, it's become that badly overgrown) and followed it back to the main Grassy Gully Road and our cars. ♦

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Heading down the Snowy valley

When Things Go Wrong

Roger Caffin

(With permission from *www.backpackinglight.com*)

My wife Sue and I had planned a 12 day snow shoe walk along the Australian Alpine Walking Track from Thredbo to near Canberra, for August 2008. We had planned this trip carefully, we knew the area very well, we had done the actual full walk once before in Autumn, and we had even managed to put in a food drop half way along. We knew in advance that the weather forecast for the first day was poor, but the following days were supposed to be improving.

The forecast was wrong. What happened was several days of extreme weather which simply blew us off the mountains. This is the story of what went wrong, and how.

I should explain the local weather behaviour for those who do not know the area. The Main Range runs N-S, while the Murray River runs W-E into this range. When the weather is bad the usual westerly winds get a lot of momentum up the Murray Valley before they slam into the Main Range. The winds do get compressed 'a bit' as they go over the ridge, which can lead to fine sunny weather down below and 'somewhat inclement' conditions up top. In addition, under some winter conditions we can get cold fronts from the Antarctic flicking across the region at daily intervals.

Our Gear

I took my new winter tent: a 4-pole 2-man double-skin design I had made myself. Previous incarnations with only three poles had worked very well in the snow. For mats we had 3/4 length 50 mm thick Therm-a-Rest mats and some 5 mm thick closed cell foam. For sleeping bags - an important item in the snow, I took my 300 g summer quilt and Sue took a new 650 g down bag I had made for her. (Weights are for the down content.) That's not enough in the snow: we also took a 600 g down quilt to go over the two of us. By having the two of us under one quilt we share a *lot* of warmth.

For travel we had Australian Yowie snow shoes, with New Balance MT1110GT joggers. The joggers were large, with room for good thick socks, and had a waterproof membrane. We had quite enough warm clothing, including both medium fleeces and some Bozeman Mountain Works Cocoon jackets with synthetic insulation. For a base layer we had good quality Macpac thermals. I will add that the thermal tops never came off for the length of the trip! Sue had a commercial Outdoor Research Zealot jacket while I had a light EPIC softshell jacket I had made. In addition we both had light PU-coated Peter Storm over-trousers, GoreTex gaiters and suitable gloves, mitts and overgloves.

Well, you would think that with all this fine winter gear we should be just fine - right? Oh Dear No.

Almost all packed up, all dressed up. Just the tent to go

A panorama around Blue Lake, Mt Twynam and Little Twynam (at the right)

Day 1

We went up the quad chairlift at Thredbo. At the top the wind was fairly strong, snow was flying, and the fog was medium - but we had expected that. The macho snowboarders were not venturing far in that weather. Ah well, we did up our outer wind-proof layers and set off. We followed a snow pole line to the old summit road. It was completely invisible under the snow but we could see the snow poles along it. We followed it to Seamans Hut for a brief respite from the gale. There didn't seem any point in climbing Mt Kosciusko in this weather. Instead we continued north down into the headwaters of the Snowy River, hoping for some shelter.

Well, the wind was less but the fog was a total white-out. The odd rock drifted into view at a couple of metres and quickly disappeared again. Everything here is a very flat snowy bowl and we couldn't even work out where the river was. We followed the compass until about 4 pm, without seeing anything which would locate us or provide shelter from the wind. So we just stomped out a tent site in the snow and put the tent up. 'Here' was as good as anywhere.

The wind rattled the tent a bit, and there was a lot of spindrift (fine powdered snow) flying around too. I built a bit of a wall around the windward end of the tent to block the spindrift. This worked OK, but the spindrift tended to curled around the end of the tent and blow back in through the little hole at the top of the downwind door. All in all, we had to close up the both the inner and outer tents almost completely. Plenty of air was available however, what with the flapping of the tent walls.

Dinner was meagre. We ate the remains of our cut lunch and had some soup, but neither of us felt like anything more than that. Not wanting dinner is rare for us: we knew it was a sign of severe physical stress and the abrupt rise in altitude. However, we expected things to improve over the coming week as the forecasters had promised better weather - hadn't they?

Day 2

We spent a comfortable night despite the wind. After breakfast we looked outside, and could see the top of the Main Range in the distance. Fantastic! We (foolishly) ignored the cloud on the horizon and focused on the bits of blue sky we could see. There was plenty of flying spindrift being blown off the crest of the range and across the tent. We packed up in the vestibule of the tent and only emerged into the wind at the last minute. As predicted by the weather forecasters some days ago, conditions were improving - we hoped.

In the photo above the guy ropes are very visible - but the string used is only 0.5 mm Spectra. The thickness was due to a build-up of ice on the string. Well, the sun would get rid of that later, wouldn't it? One of the less desirable features of snow camping is the effect of a cold wind on your fingers. Eventually you learn to do *everything* with gloves and mitts on; otherwise you quickly find that the last two segments of your fingers just don't seem to be there at all.

Mt Twynam and spindrift on the face

So off we went, down the valley of the Snowy River. Originally we had hoped to go along the crest of the Main Range, but the wind and the fog yesterday had killed that idea. The plan now was to sidle steadily upwards towards the crest, passing the glacial bowls of Club Lake and Blue Lake. We popped over a ridge and down to Club Lake for morning tea under a cornice which was meant to provide some shelter from the wind and spindrift. Well, that idea worked most of the time.

Then we climbed up and over another ridge to Blue Lake, Australia's largest glacial lake. It's very pretty in the summer. In the panorama here the lake is actually iced over and covered in snow. There is a cornice above the big gullies right in the middle of the photo. A couple of days later the cornice avalanched 80 metres when a skier went too near the edge. He died.

We wanted to get up into the high sheltered Pound Creek bowl behind the saddle seen near the right hand side. We briefly considered climbing straight up the spur opposite and traversing left into the saddle, but settled for a diagonal traverse up to the right, around the south side of Little Twynam.

As we climbed the wind seemed to increase, although we hoped that this was just due to the increase in exposure. We hopefully ignored the deteriorating weather on the crest of the Main Range. When we crested the Little Twynam spur we could see across the sheltered bowl of Pound Creek to the face of Mt Twynam. There was no-one around here, which was a bit strange. Normally one would find several tents in the bowl and people playing around with skis and snowboards.

The photo of Mt Twynam here shows lot of spindrift trails coming down the face from the peak at the right hand side. The wind up there was getting stronger. This was not quite what the forecasters had promised. The view north across the bowl to the Main Range beyond wasn't so good either. In fact, it was looking decidedly murky up there.

We wanted to get in another few hours travel northwards before we camped, so we set off across the bowl. The peak in the 'distance' had disappeared in the murk. Well, we got up there - which was a mistake in itself. This climb had taken us onto the crest of the Main Range, and the weather was getting 'a bit poor'. Actually, we couldn't see more than a metre or two in the fog and flying snow. I couldn't see where I was going: uphill, along the flat, or downhill over a cornice. I got some help by kicking bits of snow ahead with my snow shoes: if I could see the bits of snow rolling forwards then I knew at least they had not gone over the edge. In hindsight we should have retreated from here.

By the time we reached the saddle to the north of the peak conditions had got a bit rough. We decided that we should stop despite it being early, so we moved east around the north side of the peak and down from the saddle, looking for shelter. As we dropped the wind reduced, so we thought we had found some. We reached some boulders where the terrain got rougher and stopped. Unfortunately, as events showed later, we had not reached shelter; instead the wind had briefly dropped.

We stomped down a tent site, which wasn't easy with all the soft fresh powdery corn snow around. I got the tent up and built a little wall around the windward end to block the spindrift, and we climbed in. We had some afternoon tea with hot drinks, and contemplated our position. We were at Mt Anton, and we were very much on the crest of the Main Range, at nearly 2,000 m, in a gale. Ah well, the forecasters did say the weather was going to improve further tomorrow, didn't they? Yeah, right.

Looking north along the Main Range where we wanted to go

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Cooking dinner in the vestibule of the tent.

I cooked dinner in the vestibule with the wind building up. Some spindrift curled around the end of the tent and came in. Well, better a little spindrift than a lot of carbon monoxide. Hum ... We had dinner - eating a bit better this time. We went to bed after dinner, but we found that the windward end of the tent was being bellied in by the wind. We piled up some gear there to support it and move the mats down a bit, to avoid having the hoods of our bags rubbing on the inner tent end door and getting wet. However, the carbon fibre tent poles were looking very stable, so that was OK. Sleep was not easy though, as the noise of the wind was very loud - even with my head under a quilt. The weather *was* a bit of a worry.

In the night I found that spindrift was getting inside the outer tent and piling up against the inner tent. It was up to about 40 cm high and pushing inwards, against my head. I knocked it down once or twice, but it was clear that my little wall around the tent was no longer effective. Actually, it had simply been blown away. So around midnight I (reluctantly) got fully dressed and went outside to rebuild the wall. I had some difficulty getting out of the tent: the wind had piled snow up in the lee of the downwind door almost to the height of the tent. Bulldozer tactics were required, but it was all soft stuff.

Outside, it was hard to see anything unless I faced downwind, but I was able to build up a new wall of greater thickness and solidity. I was also able to repair two broken guy ropes. The hammering of the wind had caused the Spectra guy ropes to fret against the edge of the titanium snow pegs and to break. I have never had this sort of problem before - but I have never had this sort of weather before either. I was relieved to see that the snow pegs themselves were showing no signs of moving in the snow.

I retired back inside and found that the new walls were 'a good thing'. We got a bit more peace for a while, until about 4 am. Then the wind, which had mostly been idling along between 60 kph and 80 kph with occasional gusts upwards, picked up to sit continuously over 100 kph. The guy ropes by now were encased in rods of ice about 2 cm thick, which was causing a lot of wind drag on them and increased fretting. My snow walls were breached again and spindrift started to get inside, in volume. Sue's pack got covered.

Day 3

By 5 am we were fully awake. The tent was starting to shake a bit. We had a quick breakfast and decided to retreat. Whether we *could* get down off the ridge in the fog was another matter, but we didn't really have a choice. So we got fully dressed - with some urgency as the tent was really starting to move around a bit. We discovered that we had lost seven out of eight guy ropes along the sides of the tent through fretting, probably when the wind picked up. The 'deadman anchors' at the windward corners of the tunnel tent and some extra storm guys at the ends were all that was holding the tent up. Properly pitched tunnel tents are like that, even though this one was made of light silnylon fabric and 7.5 mm diameter carbon fibre tubing. They are a lot more stable than pop-up domes.

We packed completely inside the tent. I was a bit concerned that the tent might start to flap around when empty, but fortunately this didn't happen. There was another pile of snow in the lee of the door, almost up to the roof, but again I bulldozed through it. We moved our packs outside carefully (standing up was hard) and pulled the tent down - in the 100 kph wind. I didn't need to remove the side guys: they were all broken but one. I did manage to recover some of the pegs; the rest were just too buried in uncertain positions for me to bother with them, and Sue was crouching there hunched up trying to hold the tent in position for me.

So I removed the downwind corner anchors and pushed the tent upwind, flat to the ground. Sue promptly sat on it - without being asked. I was able to extract the poles one by one, with great care, and stowed each one of them as I did. Neither poles nor pegs were ever just put down on the snow! Then we just rolled the tent up very roughly and stuffed the bundle under the lid of my pack. There were a few bits of ice-encrusted guy rope left dangling around my pack. Snow shoes on, and we set off - by compass.

Let me emphasise one thing here. It may be OK for people to travel independently under good conditions, 50 - 100 m apart or even more. But under these conditions we traveled **together**, only a couple of metres apart. We did **not** allow any significant gap between us. At the worst Sue might have let me get 5 metres in front to see if the way would go. Any

About 4 am, Sue's pack inside the vestibule of the tent

further apart and I would have been disappearing from view. Mind you, I was going pretty slowly most of the time anyhow!

We set off in the direction of the Illawong footbridge, but we really couldn't see anything. We shuffled along in the complete whiteout gale, and along, and along, until suddenly I had this strange floating sensation. While one half of my brain contemplated this fascinating sensation with amused curiosity, the other half had me throw myself backwards, fast. Then I had this strange feeling I was riding a very bumpy but soft something. Finally everything quietened down with a jerk, and I found myself some 20 - 30 m downhill, lying on my pack on top of the chaos of an avalanche. I had walked over a big cornice and taken a lot of it down with me.

Well, nothing broken, and nothing even lost. I don't carry gear on the outside of my pack in little pockets: too risky. By throwing myself backwards I had managed to stay on top of the avalanche and ride it. Hum, yes, well, I'm down, but what about Sue? I could just make out her standing there at the edge of the cornice. We established voice contact, sort of, and I was able to tell her I was OK. I think she was pleased. All we had to do now was to figure out how to get together again. Not so easy: the cornice stretched out into the fog on either side for an unknown but obviously very large distance. In the end Sue simply jumped off the broken edge of

the cornice into the avalanche debris below. She bounced a bit on landing but she was OK too.

After that things were a bit of an anticlimax for a while. We went down the gully below to a creek junction (buried of course) which we could identify on the map. We tried going up and over Pound Creek Spur on the other side, but up top it was sheet ice tilted steeply sideways and the wind was too strong for us to stand. Sue was blown over several times, making the wind speed probably in excess of 150 kph. So we crept down over the side into the gorge below, looking for the next cornice in the fog. The side was actually too steep for a cornice for most of the way, although in places it was also a bit too steep to snowshoe down safely. I kicked snow-balls down, checked that they went a way, and then did a seat-of-the-pants glissade down the hill. After another couple of little cornices which we jumped down, we hit the bottom of the valley where it flattened out a bit.

When we reached a junction we took a compass course across the remaining low hills to the Illawong footbridge to cross the Snowy River. The Snowy River is somewhat larger around here and normally cannot be crossed safely. You fall in, you die: people have tried. The relief at finding the bridge was ... audible. The nice people at Illawong Lodge allowed us to stop inside briefly for food. Then there was just the hard work of traversing with snow shoes along the steep side of the Snowy River valley for 2 km to the ski resort of Guthega. By the time we got there I was tired - as was Sue. We could have camped, but ever optimistic we fronted up to the first private ski lodge we saw there and knocked at the door. We must have looked like refugees as they invited us in for the night!

Day 4

This was a bit of an anticlimax. We left early and went from Guthega in the valley up to the Blue Cow resort on the Perisher ridge above, took the Ski Tube down to Bullocks Flat, and a scheduled bus back to Canberra and our car. Such comfort!

Summary

Were we disappointed at having to abort the trip? Yes, of course, but the wisdom of doing so was unavoidable. The bad weather, gales and storms continued for the next week. And all we had really suffered was the loss of some easily-replaced guy ropes and some home-made titanium snow pegs. We could always return later.

It would be nice to say that with the right gear you can handle any weather, but the weather in the mountains can be worse than anyone can handle, and the moral is that you have to be prepared to bail out before things go too far wrong. You also need to be able to navigate by compass in a whiteout gale. Forget the GPS: it isn't meant for this. Such navigation isn't easy, but if the second in line monitors the compass and calls out corrections to the leader it can be done. Naturally, you should allow for rather slow travel. ♦

What If It Goes Wrong?

Keith Maxwell – *President BWRS.*

What should you do if there is an accident / injury on your bushwalk? How soon would help arrive? The rescue of a trapped caver in May 2008 at Wombeyan Caves was made more difficult as his location was unknown and the search did not start until he had already been trapped for several hours. Rescue can only commence after emergency services have been notified. There are three ways you could raise the alarm. Have a team walk out; use a mobile phone or a PLB ground to satellite distress 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? Why not visit the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) website at *http://www.bwrs.org.au/pages/seniorfirstaid.html* 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 and as much medical history as you can ascertain; also who else is with the patient etc?

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. Watch battery strength – a mobile with a flat battery is only pack ballast. Save your mobile for when you really need it.

Remember, that when you contact "000" 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 third method to raise the alarm in a threatening life situation is to use a distress beacon (PLB - Personal Locator Beacon often incorrectly called an EPIRB. EPIRB are the marine type of distress beacon) Again, many successful rescues have started with a PLB signal. However, you will need a clear view of the sky to get your PLB signal up to a satellite. Remember that the distress beacon receiving satellites are not directly overhead. Is there a high point nearby that gives a wider view of the sky? A PLB gives a distress location only - NO MORE. If you have an old analogue PLB it may take several hours for enough satellites passes to give an accurate fix for rescue services. Only then will the rescue start.

WARNING. The older (analogue) system is being phased out. These old PLB are now very cheap but will useless after the 1st February 2009 when the satellites will no longer listen for their signal.

Thus, the PLB of choice is the (newer, far more responsive) digital 406MHz system. All new 406MHz distress beacons are individually registered (at no charge). Emergency Services can therefore adjust their response accordingly for whether it is an aircraft crash or a group of bushwalkers or etc. Read the PLB instructions – it is possible to test a PLB without causing a rescue.

See *http://www.bwrs.org.au/pages/epirb.html* for more complete information on distress beacons.

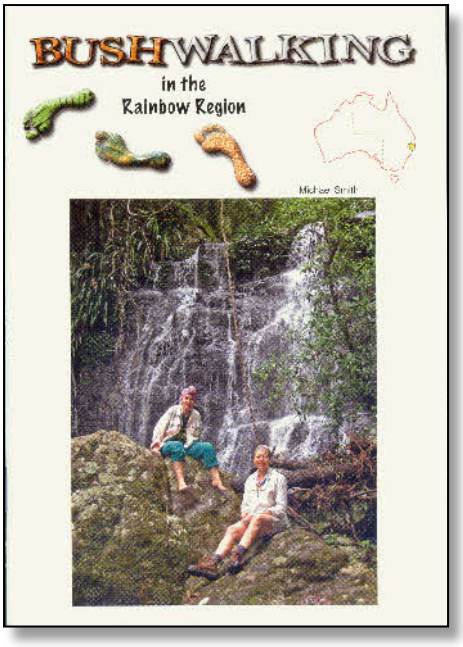
I prefer to minimize the chance of injury by following a simple principle – the more remote that I get into the bush the more carefully I bushwalk. You will find additional useful safety information at the BWRS website – *www.bwrs.org.au* Remember to "Let Someone Know Before You Go". Bush safety does not require excessive equipment, but it does require good preplanning and organisation. ♦

Book Review

Bushwalking in the Rainbow Region

Michael Smith

This bushwalking guide describes 59 day-walks in the area between Tweed Heads, Yamba and Woodenbong, in the Northern Rivers of NSW.



This is more of a booklet than a book, but it is printed in full colour on gloss paper, with nice pictures and maps for every walk, and also some information for the novice walker. Not all the walks decribed are full day walks - some are only a few hours or even under one hour, but I can see the book being of considerable value to people who are new to the area. Dare I suggest that many holiday makers might find it of value?

The description for each walk gives time, grade (1 - 6 scale), map, features and walking directions. There are aboriginal stories and notes about the origin of place names attached to some of the walks as well. There are good notes about local 'flora and fauna' as well - interesting things like Snakes, Stinging Trees, Lawyer Vines, Ticks and Leeches. The advice tends to the pragmatic and laconic: paraphrasing the effect of Rid: 'They [leeches] eventually give up in disgust'.

The author is currently the vice-president of the Nimbin Bushwalkers

and lives in the area. You can get the book from Information Centres and book shops for $7, or direct from him at *notmichael@bigpond.com* for $9 including postage within Australia. There is also a web site: *www.geocities.com/nimbinbushwalkers/rainbowbushwalks.htm* ♦

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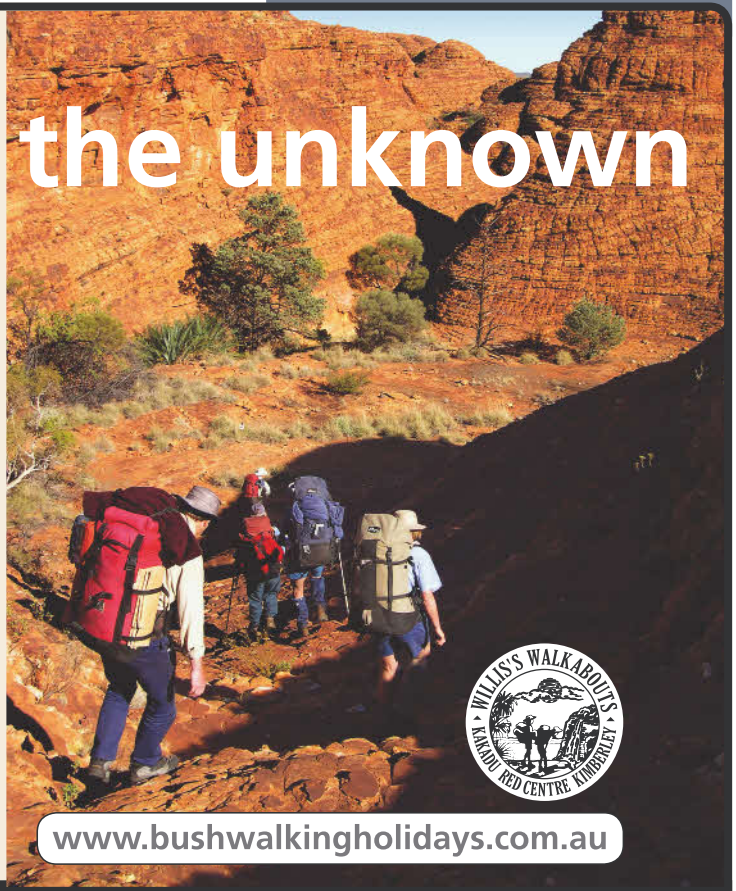

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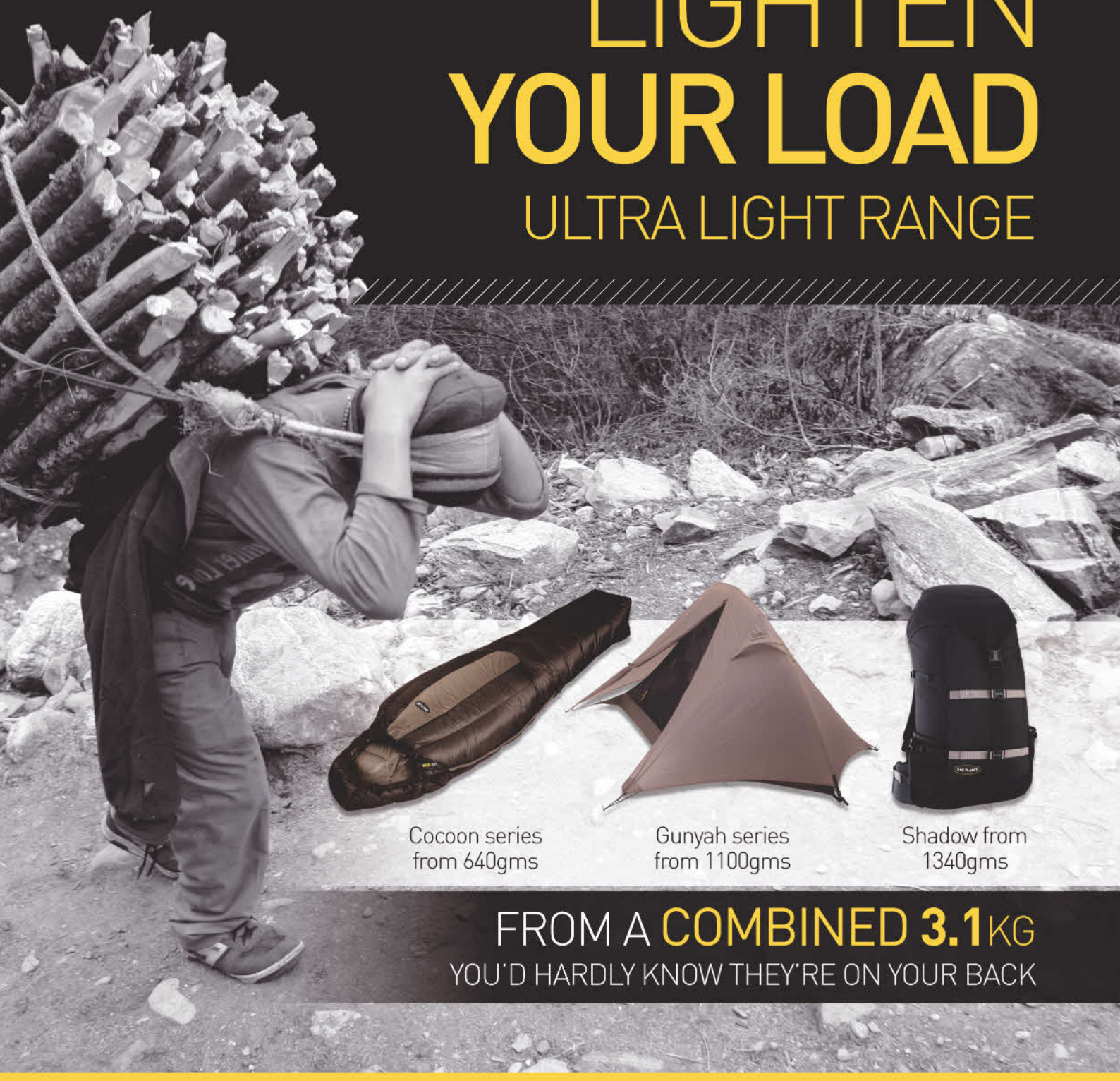

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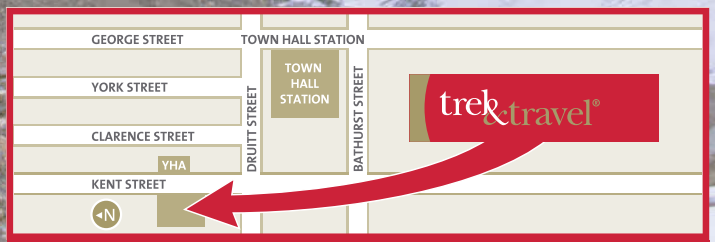

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