# The Bushwalker

Off track and in the mist—
Wollemi National Park

Volume 33
Issue 1
Summer 2008

Photo: Paul Fredrikson

**Byangee Walls and Pigeon House for lunch**

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

Photo: Roger Caffin

**Clean up time on the Barry Ranges, AAWT**

The Bushwalker
The Official Publication of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW
Volume 33, Issue 1, Summer 2008
ISSN 0313 2684

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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 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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# From the editor's desk. . .

First we had a really hot spell with high humidity and some fires, and now we are having regular rainstorms. Sometimes it seems that the NSW summer is a bit of a wipe-out. With global warming now getting into full swing we can expect the weather to be ever more extreme in the years to come. Our thanks to the previous Federal government for their complete denial of what was so blindingly obvious to the rest of the world. I am sure the fossil fuel industry appreciated your support.

Once again out articles cover a fair spectrum of the world, although a little closer to home this time. It seems Australian bushwalkers are not a home-bound bunch. And we have plenty of enthusiasts with special campaigns of their own to amuse us too. We need such enthusaists.

One thing which does puzzle me is the way NSW bushwalkers have moved to lightweight footwear (Volleys and KT-26s) while sticking to heavyweight gear for the rest of their kit. Very strange. But the local industry is partly at fault here, for sticking to the idea of 12 ounce canvas as the preferred fabric. Apparently the industry is terrified of returns - the 'please sir it fell to pieces in my hands' problem. But I note that many walkers are now starting to buy lightweight stuff direct from overseas via the web. I guess the local industry will either advance into the 21st century, or die.

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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# Burrup Peninsula

Michael Keats, The Bush Club

The Aboriginals of today are unlikely to be the first people to colonise Australia.

In front of me is a pteroglyph – a 'pecked' image of a male(?) human(?) figure, about 2/3rds natural size. The genitalia are oversize. This is not what grabs my attention; it is the fact that this 'figure' has been created by a person (or persons) systematically 'pecking' at the rock with a tool of some kind to create this image. On a blank rock I have a go with several types of rock, the hardest items around. Ten minutes of intense pounding and it was impossible to see any impression.

There are tens of thousands of such images of people, birds, animals, reptiles and symbols scattered across hundreds, if not thousands of similar dolerite rock piles scattered over this very ancient landscape. There is no apparent logic in their location or relationship to each other. Some are extraordinarily well executed with fine details perfectly reproduced.

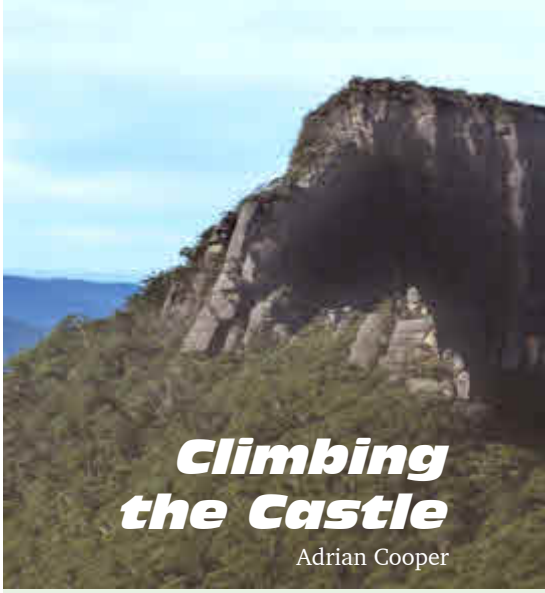
Where am I? I am 'off track' a bit, on a walk, standing with some difficulty at the top of a 20 m high pile of dolerite rock boulders on the Burrup Peninsula several kilometres north of Karratha on the north Western Australian coast. The artist who created the image would have had a precarious and uncomfortable perch to work from.

Dolerite is hard—very hard. A 5 kg hammer would just bounce if an attempt were to be made to crack a piece off. The entire rock boulder landscape is stained with oxides and carbonates of iron, bleached to a dull ochre colour. The images stand out as a lighter colour. They are the work of a technically advanced society, one that not only could feed itself, but also could also release a significant labour force for artistic effort and develop the technology to virtually etch very hard rock. Some clue to the technique may lie in the valves of huge numbers of arc (Anadara sp.) shells that can be found at the base of each artwork. Perhaps an acid within the mollusc was used to trigger a chemical reaction enabling the pteroglyph to be created. This is a riddle yet to be solved.

No living member of any Aboriginal communities know how to create such images and only a few claim them to be the creation of their ancestors. Do we need to look to the north? The Indonesians, the Thai, the ancient Cambodians and indeed Indians have all worked soft stone and the art is alive and well. Hard rock? Well, that may be a different tale.

Also in the Kimberly there is evidence of another group of ancient artisans. Their work is evidenced in what are known as the Bradshaw Paintings. There are over 160,000 sites of these paintings and they are the work of an artistically very advanced culture with very strong evidence of African influence. Again the art is alien to contemporary Aboriginal people.

Given the extensive interaction and trade which has existed between Indonesia and northern Australia for hundreds of years prior to contemporary European discovery and settlement of Australia, these are hardly surprising revelations. They do however challenge the mantra that forms the basis for the Mabo test case of Aboriginal ownership of much of Australia. It is amazing where bushwalking can lead you.



# Climbing the Castle

Adrian Cooper

In "Pigeon House and Beyond", published by the Budawang Committee, Warwick Williams' chapter "Rockclimbing in the Budawang Range" says: "It was not until the Easter weekend in 1966 ... that any definite recorded rockclimbing with modern equipment was undertaken.

On 2nd January 1963, John Holmes, Hugh Hodgkinson and I made the 75th recorded ascent of the Castle, and we did it with ropes, climbing the west wall.

We drove round to the north side of Pigeonhouse (as you could then, on a Fire Trail) and without ropes went up a steep gully, then moved right onto a slab where, to our astonishment, we found a makeshift ladder made of bush timber held together, if my memory serves me well, by nails. It was elderly and frail, and we used it with misgivings, but it held and took us over the hard moves.

On reaching the top of Pigeonhouse, we could see the established route on the west side, so we used it to descend.

We now proceeded to attack the Castle, from the south. From Yadboro Creek we climbed (by mistake) the ridge east of Kalianna Ridge and, on being confronted by the walls of the Castle, we roped up and attempted climbed one pitch of some difficulty. We retreated from this and then skirted around the walls till we found the track up the west side of our objective.

When about halfway we donned the ropes again and swarmed up the lower ramparts leading to the second tier of the wedding cake. We then moved south where we'd spied a prominent isolated rectangular boulder, which we couldn't resist climbing during our lunch break. It presented quite a challenge to abseil off this when we had got up it!

Somewhere above this we completed the ascent of the upper wall (with modern equipment!) and signed the logbook. I remember clearly Hugh writing "up the walls!", and I should say that this can be verified by inspecting the original Castle logbook, wherever it is kept.

In the absence of further testimony, I suppose we were the first.

# Growee River Explorations

Trevor Henderson,
Newcastle Bushwalking Club

When our scheduled walk to Mt Buthingeroo was deferred I decided to arrange a quick exploratory trip into the upper Growee River near Rylstone. A Saturday morning start from Newcastle makes for a long day but Jenny, Paul and Theo were all enthusiastic.

I can remember some glowing reports about this area by Robert Vincent from the late 1970s, but no one from NBC had been there for over thirty years. The area of interest is in the extreme North West corner of Wollemi National Park. The local ranger gave me some good information about access and commented that it was "wild pagoda country" and "not many people go there".

Our hastily prepared plan was drawn up from the Growee map; a sheet of the infamous 20-metre contour variety. We intended to follow Spring Log Ridge to the west of the Growee River for several kilometres before dropping down to the River to camp Saturday night. Access is through some private property but fortunately the land owners turned out to be very friendly and helpful. We left our cars at the locked gate on the park boundary and followed a fire trail for about one kilometre before heading north-west into thick dry woody scrub of the scratchiest variety - which was to torment us for the next 5 hours.

We headed up and sidled around the first of the pagodas, gaining altitude via the narrow slots between the formations. Sometimes our progress was halted by vertical walls, and then we retreated and found other ways up. Eventually we reached the top by midday. Lunch was eaten with spectacular views in every direction. But from our mid-day vantage point the way ahead seemed particularly challenging. About half way along our intended route progress was blocked by 20 meter sheer rock face. We searched around to the east side, which looked the most promising, but we did not have enough time and rope to proceed with safety.

There was no water on top so it was an easy decision to head down and around end of the ridge to reach the river before dark. We were setting up camp just on sunset. As we were erecting the tents a Lyrebird opened fire from only few metres away with its full repertoire. After this encounter we knew every bird that lives in or visit the area. There followed a traditional bushwalkers' Saturday night, a real campfire in the wilderness and good company to enjoy a meal and many cups of tea.

The party on Spring Log Ridge

Pagoda Country

On Sunday we had time to explore the river valley for several kilometres downstream. There was a good flow of slightly turbid water. Walking along the river was relatively easy although there were some thick patches of blackthorn bush. The views along the river are as spectacular as those from the top. There are house size boulders, caves and natural arches and always above, the bulging rounded pagodas leaning into the sky above. There were no signs of other people visiting the area.

Sunday afternoon we headed back upstream to the cars via Hefrons Gap and then to the 'Globe' in Rylstone for refreshments before the long drive to Newcastle.

I have subsequently looked at some aerial photographs of the area and these do show possible routes around the rock outcrops and will be very useful next time.



Camp at Khopekhe Saddle

An unnamed lake below

# Mt Wilhelm Traverse

Steve Deards, Sutherland BC

Mt Wilhelm, which sits at the intersection of three provinces in Papua New Guinea, is 4509 m, making it the highest mountain in PNG. Five of us decided to take on Mt Wilhelm after completing the Kokoda Track in July 2007. The group comprised John Morris, the leader, Michael Cook, Steve Deards, Gloria Foxley and Michael Sampson.

The logistics of organising the walk proved to be a nightmare. We certainly owe John a debt of gratitude for the hard slog required to put it all together successfully. We were also very fortunate that Michael Bates, an ex-pat Australian who now lives in Mt Hagen, agreed to help us with some of the organisation. The biggest problem was communication, and here in Australia we take for granted access to the Internet and the email facility.

A traditional welcoming ceremony

Things got off to a rocky start due to a delay of 8 hours for our flight from Port Moresby to Mt Hagen. We had planned to arrive in the morning at Mt Hagen and complete our shopping, ready for the charter flight the next day into Ambullua, the village at the start of the walk. We didn't land in Mt Hagen until 5.40pm, so we had to rush about next morning trying to buy all the necessities for the guide and porters. It was a public holiday, which meant that a lot of shops that normally would have been open weren't. It was particularly difficult getting Methylated Spirits for the stoves. When that was completed, we set out for the airport nearly 2 hours late, hoping that the pilot would agree to take us that day. But no, he said conditions needed to be perfect for the landing at Ambullua. The strip sits on top of a narrow plateau and is only 400m long – any tailwind might mean insufficient distance to stop. At the end of the strip there is a very big drop into the valley below. So we headed back to Mt Hagen and rechecked into the hotel.

The next morning we arrived at the airport nice and early. The plane was topped up with fuel & we took off, initially following the Wahgi Valley & then flying below high peaks clothed in dense rainforest, past the village of Kol & then to Ambullua. Many villagers had gathered to greet us. At the sound of the aeroplane village people rushed in from everywhere: of course they has been expecting us the day before. We met our guide David and then followed the villagers to our guesthouse in the valley below where we were to stay the night.

Prior to arriving at the guesthouse we were regaled with a welcoming ceremony by people from the village. The dancers, mainly girls & women, were gaily painted & dressed in Bird of Paradise feathers and cuscus skins, and everyone enjoyed it immensely. Afterwards, we bought some locally grown fruit and set up in our accommodation made of thatch and bush timber. In the afternoon, it was the boys and men's turn to perform a welcoming dance. Local vegetables & greens were cooked for us at dinner time & another dance/sing-sing was performed afterwards in a hut that was crammed full of villagers. The obligatory fire was burning in the centre of the hut, but the host of bodies meant it was not required to keep us warm. This particular performance demonstrated how young villagers of the opposite sex get to meet each other. Luckily we got the G-rated version.

We left at 8 am the next morning to start our journey. We had originally planned to hire one guide and 4 porters, but ended up hiring a party of seven, with 5 other villagers plus a dog coming too. The walk began by descending down through village gardens and bush until we came to a fast-flowing river. We crossed over and then it was up steeply into the forest. As we climbed, so the temperature dropped and the forest trees became clothed in beautiful mosses. As we neared our camp at 2700 m, which was in a small forest clearing, the fog rolled in, giving the ridge top camp an eerie atmosphere.

The guesthouse at Ambula

The next morning we awoke to clear skies, and from the camp we could look up and see the route for the day – up again for 900 m to Khopekhe Saddle. The walk began in mossy forest but as we climbed we left the forest behind and entered a shrubby grassland with beautiful flowering Rhododendrons. We passed some lovely Dendrobium cuthbertsonii in flower beside the track. Our pace through the thinning air had slowed and rest stops became more frequent. I found it better to walk at my own pace and not stop as the leader stopped. It took a while to learn how to walk under these conditions.

We reached the saddle at around 1pm and shortly after, the fog rolled in again and the temperature dropped. There was just enough room for our three tents on the tussock grass, and our porters cut some grass to use as packing under our tents. Our guide and porters draped a large blue tarp over the rest house in which they slept to aid in waterproofing, but it didn't rain.

When the fog lifted, we had great views down into the valleys on both sides of the saddle. We spent a spare day here to acclimatise to the altitude of 3600m. I had a slight headache that thankfully cleared by the end of the rest day. Our guide offered to take us on a short tour of the caves and overhangs that are used in times of inclement weather. The going was steep and rough, but interesting, and although only a short distance was covered it took us a long time. When we arrived back at camp, I couldn't help thinking what a miserable place it would be in wet and windy weather as it was very exposed. We had a constant light wind blowing through the saddle.

Clear skies greeted us again next day and we were soon heading up to the top of the ridge high above us. There were great views from the top, and we could see our intended route traversing the now undulating terrain off into the distance. The track here has been cut through the peaty soil by Jack Bal, an Ambulluan villager. He had realised the value to the village from potential walkers wishing to climb Mt Wilhelm via the 6 day traverse route. It had taken him and 20 helpers three years to complete, and unfortunately Jack died before the track was completed.

Camp at Khopekhe Saddle

At one point along the way we stopped at a spot with great views across a valley to distant craggy peaks and a lake far below. It was reminiscent of the Arthur Ranges in Tasmania. We then entered an area of thick fog until we were close to Seeku, our camp for the night at 4000 m. As we rounded a corner above the camp we got our first view of the mountain: it had cloud swirling around the summit. It looked rather daunting. Our camp was perched above a deep valley and distant lake, and by mid-afternoon, some dark clouds had gathered and it rained lightly a couple of times. We were now accustomed to the fog setting in for the afternoon, and hoped that it would lift during the night for a clear morning.

We were up at 2 am so that we would hopefully have clear conditions on the summit. This day was originally planned as another acclimatisation day, but our day lost in Mt Hagen due to the late flight from Port Moresby changed that. Our guide, who was camped nearby, arrived half an hour late, so we didn't start walking until 4 am. We all had head torches to light the way but the track was well-defined and easy to follow. It was quite cold and the native party stopped to make a fire to warm themselves.

Eventually we came to a creek that was quite difficult to cross in the dark. We filled our water bottles here as it was the last water until the descent track on the far side of the mountain is reached. The lower slopes of the mountain are steep tussocky grassland grading to steep scree and boulder slopes, and as we climbed, it was clear that we weren't going to be rewarded with any views as it was a total white-out. The villagers stopped to make another fire as it was very cold now and they didn't have the necessary gear to reach the top in any sort of comfort.

The party at the summit — in the fog

After a multitude of rest stops we reached the cliffs below the top. From here we could see the trig station through the mist, and it was only a short scramble to the summit. Only David, his wife and Maria from the village continued with us; the other villagers started the descent towards home. Even the graffiti bandits have been to work up here, with names of successful walkers painted on the rocks in all the colours of the rainbow. Quite a bit of rubbish lay around amongst the rocks also – whatever happened to 'carry it in – carry it out'?

We stayed on the summit for a while, hoping for a break in the cloud, but it became too cold and windy, so reluctantly we left for the shelter of the rocks below. Donning our packs again, this time with no porters to share the load, we headed down to Lake Piundi, passing three memorials to walkers who had met with misadventure during the summit walk. On the way, we met our guide for this leg of the track, although the way is obvious as this is the main route to the summit. Most walkers leave from the hut at Lake Piundi and attempt the mountain in a very long day trip.

We passed the wreckage of a crashed WW2 American bomber, and had a brief view of Lake Arunde through the clouds. As we approached Lake Piundi, it started to rain heavily, so it was good to get inside the dry hut where we set up for the night. It poured with rain during the night, and we were battered by a fierce electrical storm. The track next day down to Keglsugl was very wet but interesting. The valley was full of large treeferns and near the village we entered thick rainforest with a few orchids in flower. Bettys Place, a working trout farm, offers very comfortable lodgings and we stayed there for two nights.

Our plans of being driven back to Mt Hagen from here were scuttled by villagers along the road who, objecting to the election results, had decided to dismantle the road bridges! Luckily, we were able to arrange a charter flight to Mt Hagen, and from there we made our connections for the return home. As a final gesture, the flight to Sydney via Brisbane was delayed nearly 3 hours, which meant we had to re-arrange transfers from Brisbane to Sydney.

*If you are looking for an alternative to the crowds of the Kokoda Track, then maybe the Mt Wilhelm traverse should be considered. The people are friendly, the scenery is magnificent and you get to bag the highest mountain in PNG. Well worth the effort.*

Danjera Trig

# Shoalhaven Trig Stations

Brett Davis, Shoalhaven Bushwalkers

*Karen Davis, a walk leader with the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers, recently completed a unique (some might say "bizarre") quest - to visit and photograph every trig point in the Shoalhaven.*

So what is a trig point? A trigonometrical station, trig point, or simply a trig is a fixed surveying marker for geodetic surveying and other surveying projects in nearby areas. Trigs are set up by government surveyors to precise standards, and enable the accurate positioning of all land boundaries, roads, railways, bridges, dams and many other infrastructure projects. Many trigs have been located on top of hills, mountains and plateaus, so they could be seen from all directions.

Karen's quest officially began in early 2006 while she was studying topographic maps, looking for possible walk ideas for the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers walking program. She noticed a number of trigs, most of which she had already been to on various bushwalks during the past thirty years. However, there were some trigs that she had not visited, and they were in some very interesting places, so she thought "Why not go to all the trigs in the Shoalhaven?"

It seemed a simple question, but Karen quickly learned that it was a lot more complicated than she had thought. She coerced her long suffering husband Brett into joining her in the quest, and together they pored over all the local topographic maps. A long list of trigs was soon produced. But was it definitive? The maps showed similar symbols for trigs (marked as geodetic stations) and horizontal control points. What is the difference? Karen contacted fellow Shoalhaven Bushwalker and former surveyor, Russ Evans, for clarification. Russ recommended talking to another surveyor, Peter Price. Eventually Karen approached Darryl Halls from the Lands Department in Nowra, who supplied her with an official map of all the trigs in the area.

Karen soon found, however, that the trigs marked on the Lands Department map were not necessarily real trigs. On the topographic maps, some appeared as horizontal control points and others merely as "landmarks (other)". So, after a lot of correspondence, some of the so-called "official" trigs were bumped off the list.

Then another problem arose. The Lands Department map was excellent, showing trigs, roads, lakes, creeks and rivers, but it did not show the shire boundary, and some of the trigs on the map were definitely outside the shire. So where is the boundary of the Shoalhaven? It is too complex to explain in this story, but Brett wrote a fascinating three-part article about it for the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers club newsletter, and will quite happily spend an hour explaining it all to you if you ask him.

So how many trigs did Karen finally arrive at? The answer is seventy four, although technically there are only seventy as four of the trigs are on Commonwealth Land to the north and south of Jervis Bay—two on the Beecroft Peninsula and two within Booderee National Park. However, because they are surrounded by the Shoalhaven Shire Karen insisted on keeping these four trigs on her list. Hey—its Karen's quest, and she can make up any rules she likes …

And how many of the seventy four trigs had Karen already visited? About thirty. A few—mostly mountains like Pigeon House, Corang, Budawang and Currockbilly—had been visited on bushwalks in the Budawangs prior to moving to the area. Most of the others, also mostly mountains, were bagged on various Shoalhaven Bushwalker walks since Karen and Brett joined the club in 1999. So, forty four trigs to get. The quest was on.

Karen quickly realised that many of the trigs were in suburban areas and could not easily be included on a bushwalk, so she dragged Brett along on special day trips to bag all the trigs near certain locations. The trigs around Milton and Ulladulla were visited on a sightseeing trip to the area. A local driving trip picked up another four trigs. A massive day around Nowra, the back of Berry and all areas to the east yielded ten trigs!

There were two highlights from that particular day. Having discovered that there was a trig on top of the Shoalhaven Shire Council building in Nowra, Karen rocked up to reception and asked to see John Perry, the Council Surveyor. After explaining her quest Karen had no trouble in getting John to take her up onto the roof of the Council building so that she could see the trig. John, like all the surveyors mentioned in this story, was quite enthused about the quest, and probably did not think that it was a weird thing to do at all.

The second highlight occurred late in the day when Karen marched up to the guard station at the boom gate preventing access to the Beecroft military area and asked the personnel on duty if she could visit the Beecroft trig, which is situated atop the Observation Post within the facility. Ten minutes later we were driving down the road to the OP, with security key to get through the padlocked gates in hand. Soon after we were on the roof of the OP, taking photographs of the trig and using a massive pair of binoculars permanently affixed there to check out a container ship about two kilometres off shore. Awesome!

Some of the attempts to find trigs ended in failure. Milton, Ulladulla and Narrawallee water towers were all marked as trigs, but none had any structures on them, as opposed to the Vincentia and Greenwell Point water towers, which both have excellent trigs on top. Reservoir trig, supposedly in school grounds in North Nowra, proved a disappointment as well. A trip to

Endrick Trig

Wollumboola trig, north of Currarong, also ended in failure, but a subsequent return to the area, and some trespassing on private land, soon fixed that.

The quest to visit all the trigs took about a year. During that time, Karen programmed and led about a dozen bushwalks or mountain bike rides to pick up trigs, including cycle trips and walks to the trigs on Hindmarsh Ridge and the Budderoo Plateau above Kangaroo Valley, to Endrick Trig on Quilty's Mountaina, to Tallowal Trig near Tolwong, and walks to Barangary, Sassafras, Coolangatta Mountain (Karen did not have a photo from a trip there with her parents many years before), Moeyan Hill and the S30 trig near Blakeman's Lookout.

Some of these activities ended in disappointment as well. Budderoo Trig and Wallaya Trig both stand on private land, but both stand no more. Not a trace. The Tallowal Trig ride was supposed to have picked up Timboolina as well, but natural regeneration and NPWS hard work had rendered the Drover's Ridge firetrail pretty much impassable and we eventually ran out of daylight hours.

The biggest disappointment of all was the Wildfire Trig, situated on the western end of Broughton Head (known locally as "the Wedding Cake"). Broughton Trig is on the eastern end of the mountain, and in the not so distant past it was possible to walk across the top of the plateau from one trig to the other. A local landowner told us that her grandfather had done just that. Nowadays, however, an impassable ravine has opened up, isolating the western end. One other possible access also seems to have degenerated, with an obvious route through the cliffline now suicidal, ending in an exposed, vertical wall of crumbling rock and loose clay. Partially offsetting the disappointment of not being able to access the trig, was the realisation that the trig cairn can be seen from the road below the mountain. Perhaps Karen could hire a helicopter and get winched down to the trig?

Near the end of the quest there were just three trigs left—Danjera, Timboolina and Ettrema. Karen led walks to all three. Danjera proved to be a really difficult walk. We left the cars about halfway along the Yarramunmun Tops Fire Trail and made our way to Bladens Pass. This cleft in the cliff face is so narrow that it cannot be done while wearing a day pack, with walkers forced to move sideways for most of its length. There followed a descent of about four hundred vertical metres to the junction of Boolijah and Danjera Creek, then a climb of another four hundred vertical metres to the Danjera Plateau, all of it scrubby, totally untracked, and with unmarked clifflines to be negotiated. Two very experienced Shoalhaven Bushwalkers described the walk as the toughest day-walk that they had ever done with the club.

With Danjera trig in the bag, we had nine days to prepare for a planned three day walk to the Ettrema Trig. However, Karen wanted to finish her quest with Ettrema, because it is a famous wilderness area after which the club's newsletter, *The Ettremist*, has been named. This meant that Timboolina had to be bagged beforehand, and we had already missed it once before. This time though, we would not be mountain biking in from the west; we would be walking in from the east.

Coolongattaa Trig

Again, Brett got dragged along on yet another tough day. Starting near Coolendel, the walk would prove to be a long fire trail bash, with fire trails to Yalwal Creek, an overgrown fire trail up to the saddle west of Pannikin Hill, and the Drovers Ridge fire trail out to the trig. And back. Total distance for the day was about thirty kilometres, taking about nine hours.

And so to Ettrema, and the end of the quest. Five Shoalhaven Bushwalkers braved an Easter forecast of scattered showers and rain, and began the walk, crossing the wall of Danjera Dam at Yalwal. This was about the only time during the next three days that we were not walking through scrub. Like the Danjera Trig walk, there were no tracks either. The distance would only be about twenty six kilometres, but the ascents and descents would amount to over fifteen hundred vertical metres.

On the other side of the dam we entered the wet, dense scrub, and within minutes were totally drenched. Clarke Saddle could not come soon enough, then it was down through dense eucalyptus regrowth and up to Reynolds Saddle before a descent of Captain Spur brought us to the junction of Bundundah Creek with Silver Dell Creek. A decent campsite was difficult to come by, but we eventually found a dry, stony channel on the western bank of Bundundah Creek where four tents could be erected.

The second day was walked with daypacks, but entailed eight hundred vertical metres of ascents and descents over its twelve kilometre length. Passes through clifflines had to be found and negotiated, and marked with tape for our return. Despite leaving at eight in the morning, we did not get to Ettrema Hill until after midday. Brett had been to Ettrema Trig before, on an epic day-walk a couple of years earlier, so he went ahead in the final fifty metres to record Karen's arrival at the trig on film.

And there it was, a large, ramshackle pile of rocks covered with fallen sticks and debris, and one of the loveliest sights that Karen had ever seen. So was the quest over? No, Karen told us, it is like climbing Everest - it is not over until you get back down. Despite this, a bottle of champagne was produced - lugged in by the hapless Brett - and toasts to the success of the quest were drunk. The bottle remains atop the trig, a note inside requesting that the finder contact us via telephone or email. We don't expect to be contacted very soon …

For a brief moment after Karen and Brett had reached Timboolina a few days before, we had thought that it was Brett who had been the first person to visit every trig in the Shoalhaven, because he had been at Karen's side throughout the whole process. And then came the realisation that Karen had done a walk to Cambewarra Trig on Browns Mountain while Brett had been recovering from a mountain bike crash early in the quest. In a noble gesture (and to preserve his life) Brett had resisted the urge to drive out to Cambewarra and bag the trig during the four days between Timboolina and Ettrema.

We retraced our steps to the campsite, had a good meal around an open fire (with river pebbles underneath the fire exploding loudly and showering us with hot stone every so often) and fell into a contented sleep to the sound of rain on the tent fly. Another day on and we were safely back at the cars and making our way home, the quest well and truly over.

Has Karen's quest inspired others to embrace new challenges? Well, no, it hasn't, but it is amazing the number of people who have suggested other quests for Karen to take up, from swimming in all the ocean pools in New South Wales, to photographing all the waterfalls in the Shoalhaven.

So there it is. Brett will go out and bag Cambewarra trig sometime soon and join his wife as probably the only two people in the entire existence of the planet who have visited every trig in the Shoalhaven. Karen Davis, accountant, bushwalker, swimmer, cyclist, cross-stitcher and excellent cook, however, will always be the first.

*[The author would not be biased of course? Ed]*

# The Stinson Wreck

Michael Smith, Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

Members of the Nimbin Bushwalkers Club with what is left of the Stinson Wreck

The Nimbin Bushwalkers Club, now about 40 strong, does mainly day walks. In the two years that the club has been going, only one overnighter was completed by just two members. A suggested walk to the Stinson wreck stimulated a lot of interest, and a number of members started buying tents and gear to see if they still had the 'right stuff'.

Thus it came to pass that six of us assembled at the Antarctic Beech Rest Area, in the Border Ranges National Park, ready to follow the rim of the Mount Warning Caldera north into Queensland. I brought a spring balance to weigh the packs. Peter (62, dodgy heart) got the gold for managing to cram 18 kg into his rucksack. Michael (that's me) (57, dodgy back) brought up the rear with a miserly 8.3 kg including food and water.

We had to move up the road a bit to find the cryptic start to the walk. Along the track, unseen from the road, is a sign warning unprepared people not to proceed further. There are no other signs, or tracks, on the whole walk. Rescue - if anyone knew where to look for you, would be very difficult. On the Queensland end of the walk a sign reads: "Rugged remote area. Much of this area is in a rugged natural condition, managed for wilderness values. Visitors need to be totally self-reliant and responsible for their own safety". I carried a map, compass and GPS (which was useless).

In reality navigation consisted of following pieces of tape tied occasionally to trees by previous walkers. The slight footpad between these colourful, unofficial track markers wound left and right, seemingly with no pattern. Don, our leader (65, two dodgy knees) had done the walk six weeks earlier and had put out his own blue pieces of tape to follow. It was an unwise choice of colour, being the preferred keepsake of the bower bird. We were joking about this when we came across a bower which, apart from a few snail shells, consisted entirely of Don's blue tape.

Hillary (48, dodgy hip) registered our passing by marking the track with yellow tape. When the track was lost we would go back to the last piece of tape and fan out in a number of directions until somebody cried out "tape". An hour into the walk we had the novelty of having to wind back our watches an hour to conform to Queensland time. This helped a lot with our walking rate of eight kilometres in eight hours for the day.

We were passing through some rainforest specialising in lawyer vine. For those of you who have not met the 'wait-a-while' vine, picture a dozen grasping tendrils lined with reverse-facing sharp hooks to entangle and subdue you. We countered with tough clothing, leather gloves and deleted expletives. Some blood was lost.

We were having lunch when four members of the Northern Rivers Bushwalking Club walked in. They were on a day walk to Point Lookout. We dropped behind, allowing them to break trail for us for a while. When 2 p.m. came still an hour from their goal, they turned around so as to get back before dark. We made it to Point Lookout, 1090 metres above sea level. The view extended all the way to the sea and Mount Warning, through a gap in the forest and at the edge of a slippery slope. It was no place to linger.

We camped in a clearing, less than a kilometre away in the tick-and-leech infested forest. The Stinson Wreck was just a few hundred metres downhill. I had first read the story as a teenager and it was good to be able to put an accurate picture of the place in my mind. In 1937 a Stinson airliner crashed into the trees and impacted with the ground right here. The site was steeper than I imagined it to be. Four people died instantly and are now buried nearby. Three survived. One of the survivors, Jim Westrey, went for help. He never made it out, dying in Christmas Creek at the bottom of the mountain after falling down a waterfall. The two remaining survivors, Joe Binstead and John Proud, were found by local bushman Bernard O'Reilly after 10 days and were ultimately carried out on stretchers to an astounded Australia. There were a few pieces of the plane left. The rest is in museums, bedrooms and sheds across this

Bowerbird steals the track markers

Camp in the rainforest

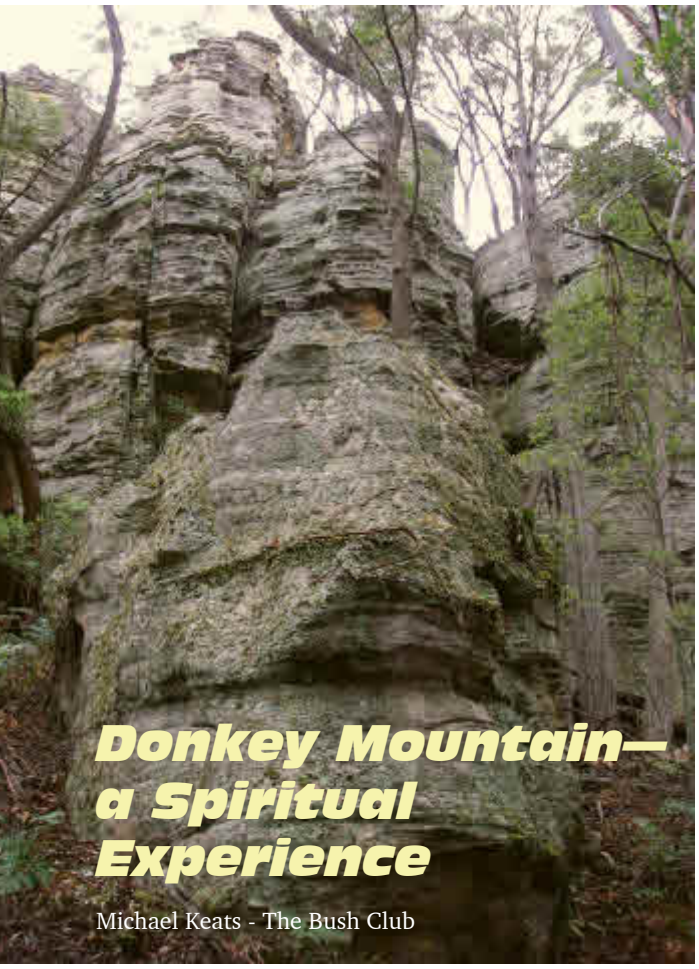
Don 'smooches' a drink from the creek

souveniring country. We signed the visitors' book and left.

We visited the creek for a welcome drink of untreated water, fresh from the boulders and ferns of this rainforest wilderness. We must have looked like tenderfoots pitching our brand new tents. First up was my half kilo siliconised nylon, home made tent. It was even lighter in the morning after something with teeth visited me in the night. For Gerard (65, very dodgy), it had been 45 years since he had carried a tent into the bush. He was in the military then, so this may have been the first time in his life that he had done it voluntarily. Ron (60, dodgy back) had waited 40 years to camp in the jungle again. This night he slept under a brand new hoochie (made in Australia in 1966) that he brought back from Vietnam after his period of national service in that well-known war. Don slept over and under a tarp, giving him the best view of all the mammals that ransacked the campsite after dark. Our new-chum campers were in good hands, Don and I had over 90 years of bushwalking experience between the two of us.

Next morning we had only three hours of walking to get us to the road. We also found Westrey's grave in a beautiful clearing beside the creek. Serenaded by a catbird and a lyrebird, we spent some time thinking about this brave man who, burnt and injured, plunged down through the forest to help his mates. A true hero, now buried in a peaceful place. After that the rest of the walk was a blur of waterfalls, cascades, orchids, fungi, birds and glorious rainforest species.

Ron under his hoochie, and nobody shooting at him



# Donkey Mountain—a Spiritual Experience

Michael Keats - The Bush Club

Pagodas, pagodas, as we climbed

Spiritual experiences are not uncommon in the Australian Bush – there are many places that captivate the mind and transcend the banal. There are however very few places that stir the emotions to a point where atunement with nature is close to perfect.

Visiting Donkey Mountain and Mount Wolgan, (very inappropriately named – it should be renamed Mount Nirvana) was for me a visit to the spiritual home of the twin gods of the natural world, Mother Nature and Father Time. It was a day that left me emotionally vulnerable to the compelling beauty of a rare and singular place.

Let me start at the beginning. Two vehicles took us in along the Wolgan Road. The surface was greasy and skidding was an ever-present issue at every turn. A few more points of rain and the road would probably be closed. One vehicle was parked at the western end of Wolgan Mountain (approx GR 360 188 near the Barton Creek) and the other at the eastern end of the tail at approx GR 398 200.

At 09:10 am under a lowering sky we entered the hayed-off fields of portion 3 (with land holder permission) and headed for a wooded hillock. Contented Herefords grazed while a flock of flighty Eastern Grey Kangaroos headed south. It was a scene of pastoral tranquillity.

The hillock connected to a ridgeline that climbed inexorably up and up. 540 m was the starting datum. In a kilometre we would be at 940 m and still a way from the top. Pastoral land rapidly gave way to dry sclerophyll forest with frequent rocky outcrops. Occasional native cypress started to infiltrate the eucalypt forest giving it diversity. The ground was deep with leaf litter. There has been no fire through the area for decades. Lichen encrusted old fallen timber was everywhere, showing the stresses of the last drought.

The Donkey Mountain is an annex of the Gardens of Stone National Park. A business-like 5-strand barbed wire fence was encountered during the climb but it has been breached in several places, possibly by cattle. Climbing continued until 10: 00 when Roger (walk leader) directed us to a great overhang – the setting for morning tea. Quirky Rogo (a member of the party) produced a gas burner and mini-kettle and proceeded to make tea in the best British tradition. Roger took out a thermos flask. The plain water drunk by the rest of us was very second rate.

During morning tea there were a few spits of rain and quite a lot of wind but it came to nothing. Packs back on, it was into the climbing once more. It was a pleasant surprise when after five minutes the rate of climb levelled out and Roger indicated it was time to leave the packs. I wondered why. There was a rock wall all around. Yes, all around except for a narrow slot through which we all squeezed – through to another world.

Here I have to continue by sustained metaphor. Imagine a cathedral. You enter and inside is an interior that begs reverence; the decoration is rich, the artefacts are precious, it is a storehouse of wealth and treasure. You go in, to find within further special sanctuaries with even more decoration, wealth and treasure. You gasp at the extreme display and wonder what deprivation and plunder elsewhere has lead to such accumulation in this spot. I am overawed.

Here we entered this special, secret, richly decorated (with orchids) series of sanctuaries and rooms that is beyond cameras and words to describe. Camera buffs Geoff and I went ballistic. Roger had given us no indication that the top of this mountain was like no other. From the road it looks like any other rugged sandstone residual mountain. On top it is another world of Conan Doyle dimensions in every sense. There are mosses, ferns, orchids and orchids. There are connecting tunnels, galleries, balconies, slots, defiles, halls, ramps up and ramps down, colonnades, chapels, sanctuaries and eyries and more. For more than 2 hours the revelations unfolded. Hundreds of images were taken but few can capture the total compelling magic of this mountaintop.

Roger says there is more to come! It is hard to imagine more after what we have already experienced. So many times we have moved from one jaw-dropping experience to another. I recently visited St Peters in Rome. It was like going to visit the Sistine Chapel many times over – rich and overpowering.

We climb a pagoda. It faces north, but the view! It is huge. We look directly at Mount Dawson through the tumbled cliff line of the Wolgan Valley. Nor'east is the very top of Pantoneys Crown. The colour and light play is awesome. More pictures. We are high enough to see the first glimpses of the cliffs of the south side of the Wolgan Valley. Roger says it is time to move on.

We come to what Roger refers to as the 'big pagoda country'. He understates. First we see sheer cliff lines, then parallel cleavages that go down forever, then isolated pinnacles that soar 60, 70, 80

Entering the Mystic Zone

metres and more. We are looking east across the Wolgan River and then south towards Carne Creek. We move out of the protection of a huge bulky pagoda. The wind roars and tugs at us. We push on to the very edge and climb a parapet.

Wow! Wow!… packs are shed. We scramble up to a filigreed and fretted balustrade and then look over. My eyes go into cinemascope mode. I cannot believe the view. We are looking south and west. The majesty of Carne Creek is awesome. The Wolgan Pinnacle stands out like a monument, but that is not what electrifies my mind, for below and west is a cluster of 4 towering pagodas, each possibly 80 m high, flanked by smaller ones and separated from us by a yawning void.

Directly below us is a drop of maybe 100 m. Our balustrade seems very insecure in the high wind. We drop down below the edge and quietness and sunshine (at last) make for the perfect restaurant in the sky. We spend half an hour here. Between bites Geoff and I are up with the camera. I could spend hours, no, days, here. It is very close to heaven.

We have to leave. Roger says we can get down and we should be able to climb up the very last point (pagoda) of Mount Wolgan. The descent looks impossible. It is a question of lots of faith, careful foot placements, using trees and not looking down. Roger says although he has been to the mountain 3 times before he has never been where we are going now…

I believe him. We negotiate this 100 m descent and arrive on a saddle between the last two great pagodas. They are huge. We look back up. The filigreed balcony where we had lunch is outlined by the sky – nothing else! Where we came down is a long slot that separates the mountain into two. The top few metres - we can see the light through them. We reflect on our ability to have been where we were and to be where we are.

A huge overhang beckons. We go and explore. It is great and leads to more views on the north side but goes nowhere. We return and start exploring the narrowing ledges to the south. We want to climb this last pagoda. A rising ramp and cliff looks promising but it needs a rock climber with some skill to lead the way. Roger tries a lower ledge but is again thwarted. A dry valley full of leaf litter drops several hundred metres down to the valley floor on the north side. We start the descent. It is easy after what we have done.

The descent seems interminable. We explore caves on the way down and finally emerge onto the gentle slopes and grazing land once more. Looking back it is more photos as we try to record our exit from heaven on high. The clouds close in again. Geoff discovers he has left his car keys in the wrong car. So much for the car shuffle arrangements.

3 km of road need to be traversed back to Roger's vehicle. There is rain in the air. We engage road- walking speed and set

Inside the sanctuary

off. The greasy road is slippery and use is made of the verges which are not much better. The wind picks up. We push on. As we pass cliffs we speculate about what may be 'up there'. Given the joyous discoveries of the day I am eager to search every mountain-top. I suspect there is a lot more pristine area to explore and document in this wild, wild land. I am just so happy to have had today.

The keepers of the sanctuary

# Book Reviews

## Finding Your Way in the Bush

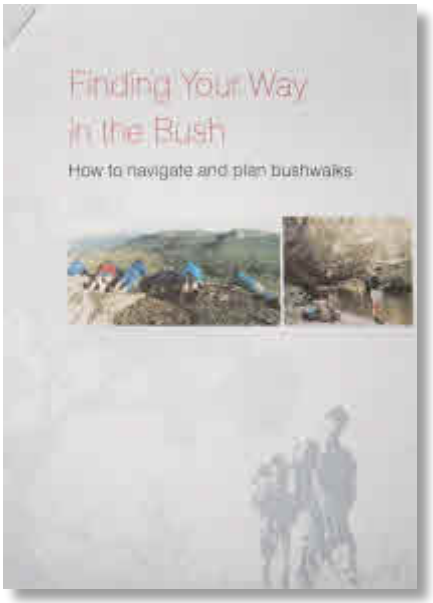
George Carter and
Canberra Bushwalking Club

Review by Glenn Horrocks

'Finding Your Way in the Bush' is a short booklet designed to explain to beginner bushwalkers the basics of navigation. The inside cover says the booklet was prepared from articles from the Canberra Bushwalking Club magazine dating back to 1987.

The book has a friendly style and is obviously written by a bushwalker for bushwalkers. This shines through throughout the book, where the examples and scenarios used have a particular relevance to bushwalking. While there are many books already available to teach you navigation, all the ones that I have seen describe the basic navigation skills extensively but never discuss how an experienced bushwalker really uses these skills in the field. 'Finding Your Way in the Bush' takes this next step and tries to impart to the reader the higher level skills which are otherwise learnt by years of walking.

Sections such as 'Limitations of maps' and 'Some other uses of the compass' are valuable to the beginner as they allow one to understand what maps cannot tell you and describe how a compass is really used by an experienced navigator. Likewise the chapters 'Taking Advantage of Different Landforms' and 'Choice of Route' will be very useful to the beginner as they too discuss important issues which would otherwise take years of experience to gain.




However, in my opinion, the promise shown by this book in summarising these important skills for beginner navigators is clouded by poor presentation. My main criticism of this book is that it gives too many wordy and long-winded explanations of concepts which could be more simply explained by a diagram. Navigation is, after all the interpretation of a printed image (a map) into what you see around you, so it lends itself to graphical explanations.

In the second half of the book, from page 23 to the end of the book at page 55 there is not one figure which shows a map! This is despite discussing topics such as grid to magnetic bearings, handrails, aiming-off, GPS, recognising basic landforms – all topics which are far more easily portrayed using a map image with the important features noted. The explanation of how to use a compass to take a bearing to identify features and to identify where you are takes almost two pages of carefully worded text. This would be better explained by use of some diagrams.

The book attempts to be up to date by including a section on GPS but it lacks enough depth on this topic to be really useful.

There are other booklets available to help beginner navigators in the bush. To my mind, none has yet achieved a useful mix of the basic navigation skills and bushwalking know-how in a form presentable to the beginner navigator. 'Finding Your Way in the Bush' makes a promising start, but it is a book crying out for a good editor to make it into a really polished publication. I will wait for the second edition before recommending it.

## Wildlife and Wilderness in the Waterfall Country

Roger Fryer

CSIRO Publishing

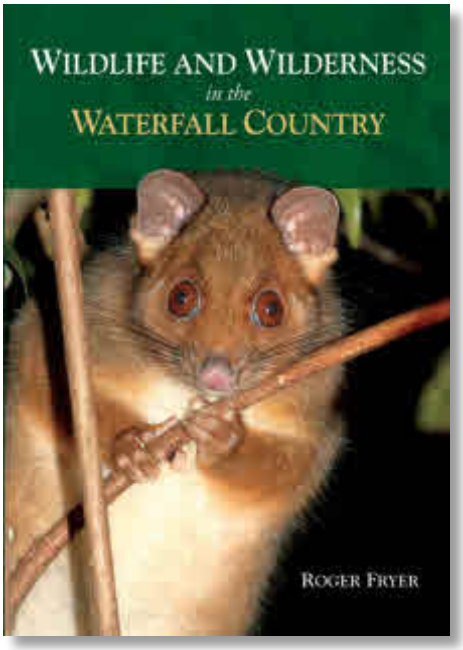
ISBN 978064668693

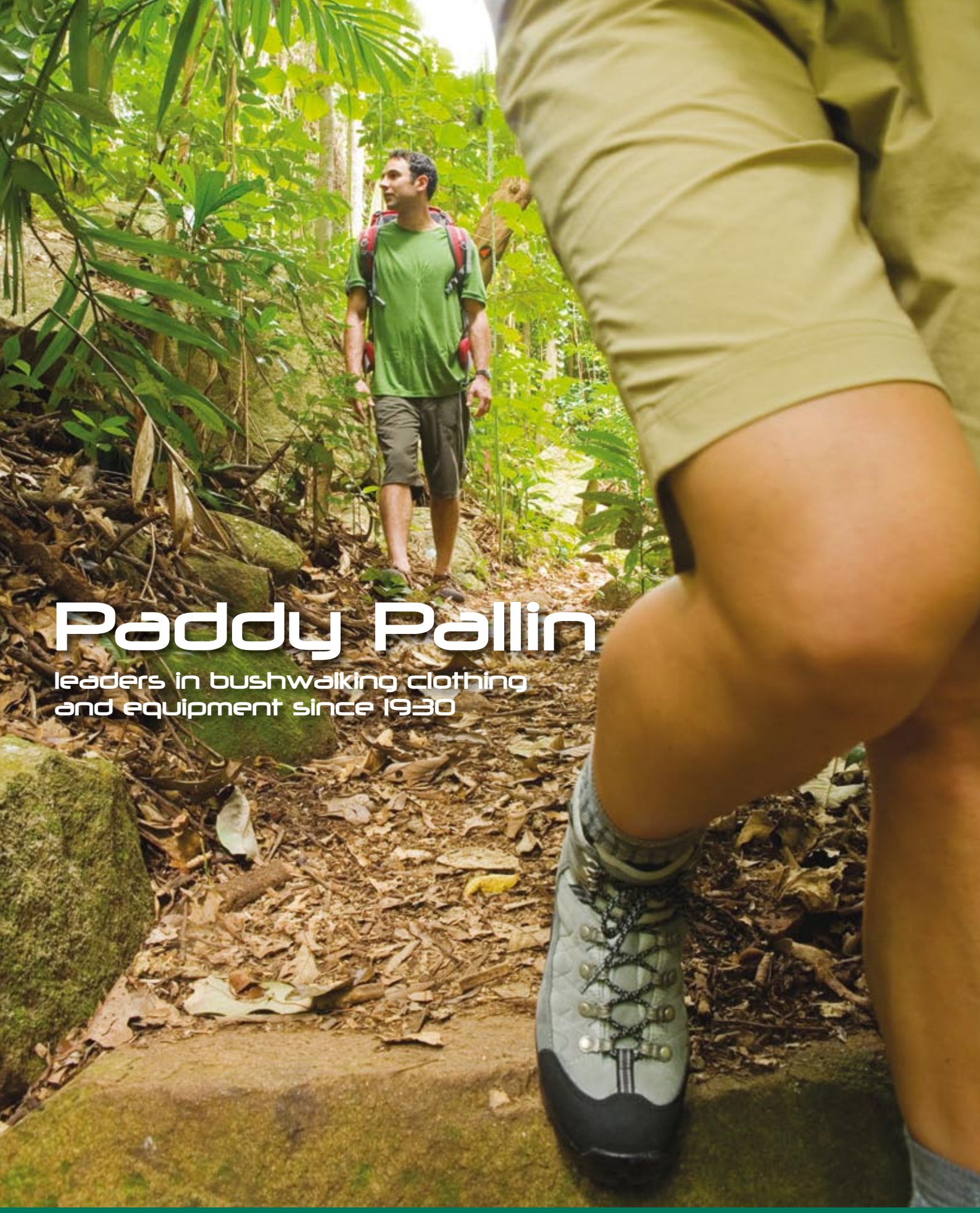
The Waterfall country is the region from Port Macquarie to Yamba and inland to the New England Highway - and a bit more all around. The book covers most of this area, with chapters on the Gorge Country, the Great Escarpment, and the Rivers to the ocean. It also covers Wildlife, Conservation and Wilderness recreation.

However, it is not really a guide book in any normal manner. It appears to have originated as a collection of weekly newspaper columns the author wrote for three years, and I have to say that that is just how it comes across. There is very little common theme to the book, apart from its focus on the area. However, in fairness, the author does say that some of the chapters in the book are really only 'teasers to show the depth of wilderness experience available in the Waterfall Country'.

Indeed, every chapter stands alone and presents snippets of fascinating information. At one stage I though the book should have been published as a free tourist handout for the whole region: it would serve that purpose admirably. The pictures are very good and the book as a whole does present the region as an interesting destination, but you will need other material to plan walking trips. But the price of $29.95 is rather high for what it offers to walkers.

Roger Caffin



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