

The Bushwalker

A hiker wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, dark trousers, a light blue hat, and red shoes is crossing a river. They are carrying a large purple and red backpack. The river is shallow and rocky, surrounded by dense green forest. The hiker is walking away from the camera, towards the right side of the frame.

Crossing Coxs River
below Mt Thomas Jones,
Blue Mts NP

Volume 35
Issue 1
Summer 2010

**Don't you wish
you were here?**



Photo: Trevor Henderson,
Newcastle Bushwalking Club

**Genoa River,
Victoria**

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



Photo: Roger Caffin

**Camp at Four Ways,
Upper Geehi River,
Kosciusko NP**

The Bushwalker

The Official Publication of the
Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW
Volume 35, Issue 1, Summer 2010
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 **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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Volume 35, Issue 1, Summer 2010

From the editor's desk. . .

One of the articles in this issue is a continuation of the Adventure Activities Standards (AAS) saga. My thanks to Leonie Bell for the article. I have added to the article an extract from the Minutes of the Confederation covering this. Further contributions on the subject will be happily accepted.

However, you will have to suffer another addition to this article, this time from me. Don flack jackets, because I have spoken a little bit of my mind on this. In my opinion, the entire AAS thing is mindless bureaucracy being driven by vested interests with zero knowledge of Club Bushwalking. Furthermore, I do not accept that the Standards have any relevance or applicability to Confederation Clubs. I would argue that we should simply inform the AAS people that we do not accept that they have any legal applicability to clubs of volunteers. We should not lie down and be driven over.

I do agree that the AAS may be needed to bring commercial adventure/quick-thrill organisations under control, and to improve the way parties of school children and church groups are taken into the bush, but those are situation of for-profit where there is a legal duty of care. The organisers of those situations are presenting themselves as being competent to lead 'customers'. Europe, New Zealand and even America have professional Guides Associations to handle these things, but in none of those countries do the 'authorities' make any attempt to even imagine that they could or should have anything to do with volunteer clubs or individuals.

There is more, but you will have to read the article.

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
Editor



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Errata: The article in the last issue on Mt Kinabalu had the wrong author. Both the article and the photos come from Steve Deards. Our apologies about this.

The Bushwalker | 3



Grass trees by the ton

Joseph Edmund Carne, Assistant Government Geologist, in his 'Geology and Mineral Resources of the Western Coalfield, 1908' makes reference to the 'Blue Rocks'. On page 245 of this weighty tome he writes,

'Blue Rocks consists of a massive outcrop of greyish – blue limestone, with a vertical face about 300 feet in height, which has been caused by the undermining and solvent action of the water of Crown Swamp Creek along a joint plane. The water disappears at this point, and is not seen above ground for about 3 miles, where it trickles over bars of travertine.'

The reference continues with an assessment of the economics of exploiting the deposit (fortunately not viable even in 1908) and a detailed chemical analysis. The Geological map of Portion of the Capertee and Wolgan Valleys, JE Carne 1901 shows the extent of this small deposit, which is located on the eastern



Exploring more of the Wolgan Capertee Divide

Michael Keats,
The Bush Club

edge of Portion 58 of the Parish of Goollooinboin. It also outcrops on Crown Creek.

Of significant interest to bushwalkers and shown on the same map is an old bridle track that commences west of Crown Creek on the north west slopes of Pantoneys Crown, crosses Crown Creek eastwards through portion 52, heads south up an extended northern spur from Mount Stewart for about 4.5 km before it enters and then passes through the Hughes Defile emerging on the talus slope in the Wolgan Valley.

Direct access to this area is now effectively closed to the public by privately held land, so the question was how to gain access and take a party of walkers to visit the Blue Rocks and experience walking the historic bridle trail. Using my network of contacts suitable arrangements were made. It should be noted each of these iconic destinations can be reached by walking in from McLeans Pass to the west, but a 3-day walk would be needed and carrying sufficient water would be an issue. The area is a bit dry.

The Crown Creek road drive down through the properties traversed typical glorious scenery of the NSW Central West. It was so dramatic that I stopped frequently to capture images so good they could not be passed by – unique ancient gums, glowing sandstone cliffs, serried rolling wooded hills, dry creeks and waving native grasses, and, in the blue distance a profiled skyline definitive of the Capertee Valley. I was captivated.

At 0940 we parked at the NP&WS locked gate. It is quite anomalous in that for the remainder of the road private 'in-holdings' alternate with land under the control of the NP&WS. After briefing and checking water supplies we starting

walking south at 0950 through surveyed portions 55, 56, 57 and 58 along the road, passing the junction with the Meadows Trail near portion 57.

From about this point we could see the stunning cliffs of the Blue Rock and the unique flora dominated by Xanthorrhoeas. At 1015 we stood in the shade at the base of the Blue Rock – a sheer wall of limestone rising almost 100 m (Carne's 300 feet) from the valley floor. We stopped here in the shade for morning tea.

While having morning tea we observed the very different vegetation that clothes the face of the Blue Rock. The largest species are Figs (*Ficus* sp) and Kurrajongs (*Brachychiton populneus*). We also noted that the presence of *Xanthorrhoea* sp, which delineate the limestone outcrop boundary. A range of smaller plants was also observed but there was no time to carry out an audit. Suffice to say the vegetation on the limestone is in stark contrast to the surrounding area.

Morning tea break over we ascended a long ramp to the east that leads all the way to the top of the Blue Rock. Unfolding views were special in every direction. Never to be forgotten views of the Tayan Pic (to the far north) and Pantoneys Crown (immediately west) were enjoyed. On the top of the cliff the *Xanthorrhoeas* were interspersed with viciously spined *Spinifex* sp. These two species delineate the massive limestone area.

Leaving the top of the Blue Rock we followed a saddle and then crossed a series of ridges following the contours on what appeared to be a well-frequented animal track. From observed droppings we think it is probably a wild goat track. The numerous vegetation changes were

Orchid *Dipodium punctatum*

The top of Blue Rock





Heading up around Mt Stewart

frequent and distinct. We passed through stands of White Box, Iron Bark and Cypress interspersed with the ever present Xanthorrhoeas and Spinifex. At times we observed complete hillsides covered in nothing but Xanthorrhoeas.

Progressing along this track the views over the Capertee Valley are magnificent. As we rounded the northern extension of a spur of Mount Stewart, the Xanthorrhoeas disappeared, the understorey became scrappy, and at times unpleasant. We walked up a couple of

false gullies thinking we were entering into the northern end of Hughes Defile. These gullies were dry beyond the imagination and as the day continued to warm up the rock sections reflected the rising heat. Our water consumption rose.

At 1140 we picked up the unmistakable line of the old bridle track. Looking upwards, the exposed rocky profile of Mount Stewart was very conspicuous while the ground under our feet was now devoid of even soil cover. It was harsh, dry and barren. Anxious to reach the shade and hopefully cooler conditions within the defile we pushed on losing and then finding what could be remnants of the old trail. Given that over 100 years has elapsed since it was in active use, we did rather well.

The rate of climb in the defile is continuous and nearly 400 m of elevation are gained over 2.5 km. There are many sections of bare rock and very deep, dry and slippery groundcover of old leaves and bark. It is not until you actually enter the throat of the defile that the rate of climb eases and the vegetation changes once more. Under normal circumstances the defile would be a beautiful place with epiphytic encrusted rocks and carpets of Blechnum sp ferns. On the day it was desiccated and most species showed signs of extreme water stress.

About half way along Hughes Defile we found what we believe to be the recently deceased remains of a Greater Glider⁽¹⁾ (*Petaurides volans*). Much of the animals fur was still intact and it was photographed. The shape of the head and



The limestone face of Blue Rock

the general specifications seemed to be right.

At 1310 we arrived at the crest (and watershed) within Hughes Defile. It is remarkable for being dominated by a large, centrally positioned, almost circular sandstone boss (pagoda) about 30 m high and about the same diameter, with an even more remarkable continuous cave right around the circumference. The cave has been used for camping, and going by

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It was hot, and dry

found newspaper evidence was visited on the ANZAC weekend in 2001.⁽²⁾ From the website archives of Sydney University Bushwalkers we know it was also visited on the June weekend in 2006 when conditions were freezing cold and wet. [The Editor passed through here in 2000.]

The cave provided welcome shade and a good place for lunch. A quick walk around the cave revealed that the descent down into the Wolgan Valley is much steeper than the ascent from the Capertee Valley side. After lunch left our packs walked across the saddle extension to the

east. Here in an overhang was a small cairn marking a unique pass up through a canyon like slot onto the pagodas above. It is a short climb to the top where the views are rewarding.

Turning the head south provided a good view over part of the Wolgan Valley and the phallic, bare rock protuberance of Cape Horn; turning the head north was a view of the pagoda-edged alignment of Hughes Defile and the spread of the Capertee Valley. Took photos but the haze made for poor definition of the images. Returned to the cave and retrieved our packs before starting out on the return journey. At least in the heat of the day we were headed down hill.

As we descended passed now familiar features and at 1520 intersected first with a fence and then with the Meadows Fire Trail. From here we continued walking west into an ever-hotter sun and down the trail (a 4WD track). We saw many inter-bedded layers of limestone in the roadside cuttings and a return of the Xanthorrhoeas. We also noted some serious new fencing and gates installed by the NP&WS designed to discourage unauthorised traffic. After allowing numerous drink stops we arrived back at the vehicles at 1600. ♦

1 NP&WS ID from photographs

2 A copy of the Australian Newspaper had been left under a rock

The pagoda in Hughes Defile

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Two Weeks in the Corbières - SW France

Rodney Hills,
Batemans Bay Bushwalkers



Walking group on the Roc de Quercourt, Pic de St. Barthelemy
in the background, Photo: Rodney Hills

In the 13th and 14th centuries a group of religious 'heretics' in Southern Europe were pursued by the Roman Catholic Church in the only Crusade against fellow Christians. The final acts of this saga played out in a remote area to the northwest of Perpignan, close to the Pyrenees and the Spanish Border. The rough wild terrain made it so hard to stamp out the heretics that the bloody story became almost mythical. As a result, the area is now named the 'Cathar Region' after the persecuted group.

The dramatic scenery was also the reason why my wife and I decided in 2006 to buy a little house in the remote village of Padern in the Corbières on the Cathar Trail. This led to our inviting a group of bushwalkers from the Batemans Bay Club to join us in 2009. Two walkers came in Spring and ten in Autumn – all mixing a two week stay with other activities in Europe. We accommodated them in the Gite d'Etape in the local Marie or Town Hall, only five minutes from our house. Part of the experience of living in such a village included barbeques in the village post office and carrying water supplies from the river when the antiquated village water supply failed for two days.

Everyone agreed that the walking experience was stunning. Following a pattern of two days walking and one off, the first week was relatively easy, saving energy and building fitness for the more challenging walks in the second week. So, day 1 was a four hour gentle climb on the mountain behind the village. Few believed how high they had climbed when they came out on the escarpment way above Padern. Day 2 was a longer six hour walk through the vineyards,

touching the garrigue on the hillsides, and visiting both the 12th century Chateau Aguillar and the adjacent village of Tuchan.

After a day at the coast, sampling the fish at the one-time artists' retreat of Coullioure, the group experienced its first steep climb, from Padern to the spectacular Chateau Queribus which sits on an impregnable rock above the village of Cucugnan. The next day we headed north to the green secluded village of Termes, and a circular walk, beginning beside a river, over a limestone cliff line, then through forests along part of the GR36 before descending to Termes' famous Chateau. Day 5 we drove further afield across a scenic valley to the Fenouillèdes, for a walk through the Gorge de St Jaume, then up into agricultural land and natural forest.

Now a week was over and the walks became more challenging. So I was quite pleased that mists from the Mediterranean had rolled in to hide the

peak of La Quille as we walked parallel to the mountain to the base of the climb – the longest the group had so far attempted. We took the long route up through damp forest at an easy pace, and were rewarded when we emerged above the mist to unexpectedly clear views to Canigou and the Pyrenees, as well as the Pech de Bugarach – the magic mountain of the Corbières. All were poking through the grey swirling sea in the valleys. We scurried down in case the clouds thickened. At the end of the walk most of the group visited the nearby 12th century Peyrepetuse Castle, where hang-gliders were launching themselves from the mountain ridge next to the Castle.

Next morning the skies were blue as we drove for nearly two hours to the historic village of Montailou and the demanding but beautiful wooded climb to the clear pastures of the Roc de Quercourt. This was a day of cow bells and gentians in Spring and crocuses in Autumn. The climb out of Montailou

Pyrenees in Spring from the Col de Belagues Photo: Rodney Hills





Cowbells above the village of Montailiou Photo: Molly Cox

begins at 1000 m, so our more elderly walkers were careful not to over stress themselves on the climb. The reward of the climb in any season is perhaps one of the the grandest vistas in Southwest France, encompassing snowy peaks of the Andorran Pyrenees and the main ridge of the Pyrenees stretching away to both East and West. To the North it seems as though the view could stretch to Paris. Our only company on the Autumn mountain walk was a French air force plane flying level with us, dropping paratroopers into the valley to the North.

After another rest day, taken by some in medieval Carcassonne and others in Narbonne, or sampling the sparkling wines of Limoux, we experienced real rain for the first time. With a delayed start, we changed plan and decided on a low level walk round the base of the Pech de Bugarach, a rugged nearby mountain which some believe has spiritual or magical properties. This rambling walk through meadows and forest, then over the shoulder of the mountain, was a great success. It included a deserted but very evocative farm village 'Campeau' close to the Col des Pechines.

The final day: it started clear and sunny like most others. But as we approached the start, at the famous Chateau of Montsegur, two hours drive away in the Ariège valley, the clouds suddenly rolled in. This was the only walk for which I really wanted to find an alternative route to the high ridge. On the reconnaissance, the so-called route had been difficult to follow and I had found the steep climb up through the Birch forest beautiful, but I considered it intimidating for a group of 'older' walkers. So on the day I suggested an alternative that I hoped would be easier. What a mistake! We found ourselves with yet another disappearing path, climbing steeply through the slippery leafy slopes among Silver Birches to emerge in cloud that required us to navigate by compass. Although the route is fascinating, passing through the re-

mains of an ancient quarry and talc mine, with forests of red-berried mountain ash and beech, we saw only occasional glimpses of the forested mountains around and below us. We never really saw the Chateau of Montsegur – the site of the most famous Cathar massacre in 1244. The cloud stayed low all day.

The group departed the next day, by car, train and plane. None of the walkers was under 60 and our oldest was 78. But almost all of the walkers completed all the walks. They were so much fitter when they left, you could see it in their swaggering walk. Ted calculated he had reduced his girth by 4 belt notches over the fortnight! The mutual support among the group was fantastic and was a key reason they were so successful. Only on one day did some of the group choose an easier walk, although one was available each day from the same starting point.

My wife and I had such a good time with our new friends that we decided we would do it again perhaps for as long as we could, by opening the experience to members of other walking clubs. If you are interested contact Rodney or Gillian on 02 4478 6104 or at rodneymhills2@bigpond.com.

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Chateau de Montsegur in cloud Photo: Rodney Hills



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Martindale Creek

Trevor Henderson,
Newcastle Bushwalking
Club

On the plateau above

After last year's walk to climb Mt Monundilla we could not wait to return to the central section of Wollemi National Park to continue our exploration of this magnificent area. Martindale Creek is one of the major streams in the park. It rises to the east of Mt Monundilla and flows in a north easterly direction for over forty kilometres through the National Park and then beyond to enter the Hunter River downstream of Denman in the Hunter Valley. A major stream that rises in wilderness and is not touched by the hand man for so much of its length commands the attention of any bushwalker.

After studying the map and Google Earth we decided to visit the central section of the gorge. From our previous visit we knew there was some very steep country, but the contours also suggested negotiable routes and a section of the valley appeared slightly wider and with a flat floor.

Access to this section of Wollemi NP is not so easy. There are over fifty kilometres of forest tracks to reach the starting point and it was almost eleven o'clock on Friday night when we arrived at a small clearing beside the road and camped, well placed for an early start next morning. Our camp site was up high and had good views to the east and west. On this clear winter night visibility would have been up to fifty kilometres or more. Row after row of dark ranges separated us from the horizon in every direction but not a single light was visible.

Saturday morning was clear and cool and we were away by 8 am. We left the car a few kilometres further along the road and set off in north westerly direction along our chosen ridge. Close to the road the vegetation was thick but, just as the aerial photos had shown, it opened

out considerably within a few hundred meters. This country seems to be recovering very slowly from the bushfires of recent years. Navigation along the ridges was quite easy and the various turning points readily identified.

After about three and a half hours we were at the edge of the gorge. On the opposite side there was an impressive cliff face but on our side the relatively gentle gully to our left provide easy access down through the cliffs. Within about thirty minutes we were on a sand bank in the creek bed enjoying lunch. The creek was flowing well.

Saturday afternoon's activity was to walk upstream and check a couple of major tributaries on the eastern side as

one of these would be our exit route on Sunday. From where we entered the creek it appeared that going up the stream would be relatively easy, and as I mentioned the contours suggested that there may be section of the valley with a slightly wider, flat floor. We had only gone about two hundred metres upstream after lunch when we struck the first of a series of major obstructions: rock jams. Boulders the size of caravans filled the valley floor, necessitating a diversion high up the side to pass. After each of these we were rewarded by a short section of sand or gravel creek bed before being presented with our next challenge. Nowhere did we find anything like a flat flood plain.

Camp on Martindale Creek



Despite the physical exertion required to progress we all quickly came to appreciate what a magnificent pristine wilderness we were privileged to travel through. There are not that many places where you can walk for kilometre after kilometre along a river and not see a single trace of human presence; no camp fires, no silver foil, and no fertilizer bags and no assorted bits of plastic.

As the afternoon progressed I began to think that finding a campsite may be problem but as luck would have it there was flat bank with just enough room for four tents at the junction with our chosen exit creek. Saturday evening was one of those classic wilderness bushwalkers camps, a small smoky fire and time to enjoy cooking a meal and the companionship of like-minded adventurers.

Breaking camp on Sunday morning we paid scrupulous attention to cleaning up our camp site and fire place to leave no trace of our presence. In places like this I am reminded of a saying often used by John Day, an old bushwalking mate and early NBC member: “never let it be said and only say it in shame that there was beauty there until he came”.



Relaxing around the campfire

The route out proved straightforward, we started up the side creek and at each waterfall or obstacle we climbed further up to the right and after about two hours we were within 500 metres of a saddle on our exit ridge. At this point the vegetation

conspired against us and we had to change course and cut back onto a spur to find a more comfortable route up. On top we were rewarded with magnificent

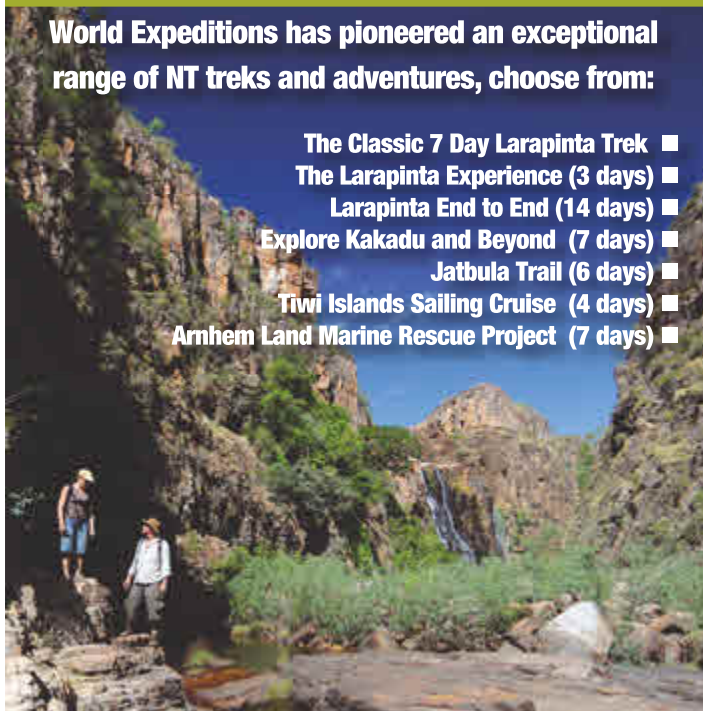
views into Martindale Creek and Mt Monundilla to the south. We had lunch on a peak and then left our packs for a one kilometre excursion down a spur on the southern side to check the creek on that side for future access. We walked down the spur to point where there was only air in front of us and the cliff on the opposite side of the creek was probably less than four hundred metres away.

After our side trip we headed of back to the cars, within two hours we reached the Hunter Trail and were the cars by 3.30 pm, an early finish for a change. Looking back on the trip it is weekend I will remember for the magnificent untouched wilderness. Let's hope it remains this way forever. ♦

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A nice easy flat valley. . .

Mt Bartle Frere and Hinchinbrook Island

Steve Deards,
Sutherland Bushwalking Club

We flew to Cairns very early in the morning and picked up our hire car from the airport. Next stop was Gordonvale on the way south to pick our stove fuel, fruit and other bits and pieces we happened to spy whilst in the supermarket there. We also had lunch opposite the huge sugar refinery which was gushing smoke, steam and sickly sweet aromas.

We arrived at the Josephine Falls carpark and packed for the two day trip to visit Mt Bartle Frere, at 1622 m the highest peak in Queensland. Before setting out for Big Rock camp we quickly visited the Falls and paid our camping fee of \$5 per night to the hungry machine beside the track. The walk up to the camp followed a graded track through rainforest, crossing a couple of creeks on the way. There was enough space for our three tents with a good supply of water just below camp.

We set off next morning at 8 am under overcast skies. As we progressed the track became rougher and the gradient increased until we reached the first

boulder field. One of our party had turned back by this stage, so four of us continued up to the emergency shelter and helipad. It was getting very warm and the clouds were breaking up revealing the patchwork quilt of the fields below. Lots of sun orchids were flowering beside the track. Higher up, past the helipad, the second and larger boulder field is reached. Rock hopping and good balance are required as the boulders are very large and angular. New steps have been bolted onto some of the boulders to make passage easier. A small flat open area was passed which had room for a small tent. The track once again entered the forest for the final steep pinch to the top. At the summit, a large rock was scrambled up to get good views of the surrounding hills and coastal plain.

We were very lucky with the weather so far – this area gets over 8 m of rain a year. After a quick lunch we retraced our steps back to Big Rock camp. During the night, it started to rain lightly, so I had to get out of bed and dash around to bring gear in to keep it dry. We decided to pack up early and have breakfast under the picnic shed back at the carpark. The wet weather had brought out the leeches and Horst had got one on his lower eyelid. After removing the leech the wound bled for quite a long time. I think we all got them on our legs.

After returning the car we caught the coach to Cardwell where we spent the night. I can recommend the local pub for a good meal of Coral Trout. Next morning we were transferred to the wharf for the trip over to Hinchinbrook Island. From the ferry you can get a good appreciation of just how mountainous the island is. We traveled up a channel through the mangroves to be dropped off at a landing just behind the beach at Ramsay Bay.

At the southern end, we entered the forest and climbed to a saddle below Nina Peak. We decided to do the climb then rather than backtrack next day. It is quite a



Boulder field on Mt Bartle Frere

steep climb but well worth it as the views are spectacular. We then continued to Nina Bay to camp. No rat-proof boxes here, just hooks to hang your gear from. We had our first taste of Hinchinbrook mozzies – they got much worse further south. The weather was cloudless with a nice cooling breeze.

Our second day on the island entailed a short walk of only 2.5 km to Little Ramsay Bay. The route was coastal to begin with. At Boulder Bay, we watched some turtles just off the rocks while we ate morning tea. The track then entered the forest and emerged at the northern end of Little Ramsay Bay. There was a nice camp here a little further along the beach with plenty of rat-proof boxes. We all had a swim in the sea – it was quite warm but refreshing. Golden Orchids grew behind the beach and at Banksia Bay. The mozzies were quite bad as the lagoon is very close to the camp. During dinner, we had a beautiful moonrise. A mouse chewed a hole in the top of John's pack as he had forgotten about a muesli bar wrapper he had left there.

We packed our gear for the two day trip up Warrawilla Creek for the 'assault' on Mt Bowen. We left at 7.30 am in clear skies. Once in the creek, the going was quite easy as the rocks are relatively small and the terrain is gradual. After a couple of hundred metres, the creek appears to run dry, but water again appears a little further on. As we continued, the creek steepened and the boulders increased in size resulting in slower progress. It was quite hot and open walking in the creek. After about 3 hours, one of the party reluctantly returned to camp. We decided



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to get water at the major creek junction as we weren't sure if there was any further up – it had been quite dry on the island during the preceding months. The creek steepened again and we entered rainforest. Careful searching revealed cairns judiciously placed along the route, and these were followed almost to the saddle where we camped. We were disappointed to find a tent erected in the best spot at the saddle. Camp sites here are at a premium. So much for the permit system employed by the QNP service. We managed to find enough space for our two tents. It had taken 8 hours from camp to saddle.

Next morning we left in fog for the summit. After ascending to the top of the first steep climb through Casuarina forest, the track passed through heath and was indistinct in places. The fog slowly lifted so that when we arrived at the summit cairn, about 1.5 hours later, good views were obtained between the gaps in the cloud. We spent an hour looking around before descending back to the tents. We packed up and returned to camp via Warrawilla Creek. This trip is for fit and experienced walkers only.

Our route the next day was from Little Ramsay Bay to Zoe Bay. Low tide meant an easy crossing of the lagoon. After crossing two small beaches the track entered the forest and turned inland so that North Zoe Creek could be crossed upstream. There were crocodile warning signs here. After 5 hours walking the wide beach of Zoe Bay was reached. We found a great camp site with a picnic table and rat-proof box behind the beach north of the lagoon. The mozzies that night were bad, but again we had a great moonrise over the ocean. We opened a coconut found on the beach.

On the next day we left Zoe Bay and shortly after were swimming in the beautiful pool below Zoe Falls. The track climbed up beside the falls and eventually reached the highest point on the route. Further on we turned left off the main track and headed down to Sunken Reef Bay to camp for the night. There were no crowds, no water but plenty of mozzies. Water had been collected previously from

Crossing Mulligan Creek



Diamantina Creek. The afternoon was spent relaxing or walking around the rocky headlands. The ocean water was the clearest we had seen. At the back of the beach there was a huge mound 2.5 m high constructed by a Orange Footed Scrubfowl. Such a big mound for such a small bird!

The following morning, we climbed back up to the main track and proceeded to Mulligan Falls. This was another idyllic place to spend a few hours swimming and relaxing. On the way we passed quite a few goannas. Mid afternoon, we left the falls and began our walk down to George Point for our final night on the island. Other walkers had the same idea, and by the time we reached the camp it was full. Seven walkers who carried a tent each had beaten us there. We backtracked up the beach and found a sheltered camp with no crowd. We could see the huge wharf which juts out into the ocean at Lucinda. There were good shells along the beach.

We were picked up at 8 am by boat and dropped at Lucinda shortly after to end our sojourn. It had been a great trip with unbelievable weather.

We couldn't have hoped for more. ♦



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Air Niugini

Adventure Activity Standards

By Leonie Bell

[Edited to condense two contributions into one - Ed.]

In the autumn issue of *The Bushwalker*, the article 'The Looming Nightmare' concerning the possible implementation of the Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) sounded a timely warning to clubs Australia-wide. On the whole, the proposed standards are sensible, if somewhat bureaucratic in style. Bushwalking clubs in NSW have been aware of the need for risk assessment strategies for some years and Confederation has assisted them by preparing a framework document - many years ago.

Of course we all want our leaders to be knowledgeable and experienced, however the 'skills expected of a leader' as defined in the Victorian AAS are quite another matter. I note that the author of 'Looming Nightmare' thought that the appropriate skills were not obviously defined and that it is not possible to define them. In fact, to anyone familiar with Vocational Education Training (VET), they are very precise. In both the NSW AAS Appendices A and B and also in the Victorian Bushwalking AAS (page 15), sections 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 clearly define the 'benchmark' referred to in section 2.1.1 as the required standard. It lists skills which leaders must be qualified in prior to taking people into the bush.

This list has a name and a code for each skill. This enables you to consult the National Training Information Service (TIS) website for a definition of each skill (see details below on how to access this information). This is a standard modus operandi for a vocational teacher, but I suspect it will scare the wits out of any potential leaders. It is written in 'education-speak' and is quite intimidating to the uninitiated.

[But see commentary at the end - Ed.]

The NTIS requirements

The skill sets are written by Industry Skills Councils who advise the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) on course content that is appropriate for their given industry. These qualifications and skills are reviewed every 5 years. Anyone can access them if they know where to look on the NTIS website.

The main worry is that although the AAS say that a formal Statement of Attainment (i.e. a TAFE certificate or equivalent) is not required, in practice the only way for a commercial operator to ascertain a leader's qualification will be to require a certificate from a TAFE or Registered Training Organisation (RTO). On an amateur basis, club leaders are not going to study at TAFE in order to lead a bushwalk.

To find out more go to: www.ntis.gov.au, click on the blue box labeled 'Search Courses and Qualifications'. In the 'Search for' box, type in either the full name of the subject or preferably the code e.g. Respond to emergency situations or SRXEMR001A.

Select the buttons: 'This exact phrase', 'Units of Competency' and 'NSW'. Click on 'Search'. You will then have a dozen or so pages of the requirements for this subject. Try doing this for all 16 subjects they suggest are essential to lead a bushwalk on tracked or easy untracked paths and you will give yourself a fright. The subjects are listed in the following table. There are 12 more subjects listed in the AAS for more advanced off-track walking.

Skills required for leading tracked or easy un-tracked bushwalks

Subject	Code
Respond to emergency situations	SRXEMR001A
Provide first aid	SRXFAD001A
Facilitate a group	SRXGR0001A
Deal with conflict	SRXGR0002A
Apply sport and recreational law	SRXINU002A
Follow defined occupational health and safety procedures	SRXOHS001B
Undertake risk analysis of activities	SRXRIK001A
Operate communication systems and equipment	PUAOPE002A
Navigate in difficult and trackless areas	SRONAV002A
Plan for minimal environmental impact	SR0OPS002B
Apply weather information	SR0OPS003B
Use and maintain a temporary overnight site	SR0OPS006B
Plan outdoor recreation activities	SR0ODR002A
Guide outdoor recreation activities	SR0ODR005A
Demonstrate bushwalking skills in difficult and trackless areas	SR0BWG002A
Guide bushwalks in tracked or easy untracked areas	SR0BWG008A

Comments

I actually oppose this aspect of the standards for commercial operators as well as for amateur clubs. Small operators in remote rural areas without access to TAFE courses, or a large population base to provide a pool of job applicants, will find it virtually impossible to meet this section of the standards. Clients naturally will prefer 'accredited' tour operators, so will gravitate towards the larger city-based tour companies rather than the local tourist operators, who have intimate knowledge of the local landscape and a lifetime of bush skills to apply to it.

For those of us who are experienced bushwalkers, it is obvious that we would prefer an experienced local bushwalking guide to a relatively inexperienced, certificate-holding leader. The general public will be none the wiser and will be the worse off for it.

These requirements are symptomatic of a world that is infected with the American disease of suing people whenever they have a problem, instead of taking responsibility for their own lives. Unfortunately we can't ignore it and hope it will go away. It is a regrettable part of modern life that is here to stay. As an individual we are powerless to stop the juggernaut. That is why it is essential for Confederation and Bushwalking Australia to have a voice in the establishment of these standards and to take a stand against applying them to amateur clubs.

According to the Victorian AAS, the Scouts and Guides endorse them. It must be difficult to get enthusiastic youth leaders now. How can they recruit volunteer leaders prepared to do a Certificate III or IV in Outdoor Recreation (1-2 years full-time TAFE), which is what acceptance of these Standards implies?

Implications for Clubs

How does all of this translate into meaningful practices for our bushwalking clubs? In asking this we note that in Draft 2 of the AAS, the Confederation won a major concession, in that leaders of amateur clubs can self-assess the abilities of their leaders. [See below for more details - Ed.] This should not mean that clubs can become complacent. Clubs should note the following extract from Appendix C of the NSW draft document on bushwalking:

'Individuals who do not possess formal qualifications but have sufficient skills, experience and knowledge to conduct adventure activities in accordance the NSW AAS must provide documented evidence and/or demonstrated evidence that they are competent to perform all the skills and duties listed below for the relevant role. Documentation may include log books, diaries, trip reports, photos or videos. The organisation or leaders of the adventure activity must carefully consider the appropriateness and methods of peer assessment. It is recommended that leaders and organisations seek the services of a third party assessor to review and/or observe the candidate. The skills defined in the SRO 03 Outdoor Recreation Industry Training package or National Outdoor Leader Registration Scheme (NORLS) must also be reviewed against the candidate's evidence.'

It will require some serious thinking from club committees on how to assess leaders' abilities and the documentation they provide. This could be through surveys completed by prospective leaders. Another method would be to have 'Assessors' appointed by the club accompanying the leader on trips and ticking off checklists of accomplishments. Alternatively a buddy system could be implemented for new leaders who could be progressively assessed as competent to lead different types or walks under different conditions. A sub-committee could be appointed to assess the documentation submitted. Whichever method is chosen, clubs will need to remember that they are declaring their leaders have all the skills and abilities that are listed on the antis web site. According to AAS Appendix C this assessment is not transferable to other clubs or organisations, but is purely internal.

The down side is that leaders, both existing and prospective, may decide that it is all just too much hassle. The good news in all of this is that at this point in time the AAS are intended as being optional. We can only hope that some

well-intentioned people don't derail this and insist it become mandatory.

Many clubs currently have a simple list of leaders and the type of trips they can lead. Others may have no formal assessment of any kind other than enquiring if the prospective leader has led similar walks in the past. If they want to follow the new standards, it will require some serious thinking from club committees on how to assess leaders' abilities and the documentation they provide.

Confederation will be reworking their Risk Assessment guidelines. As part of this they will need to consider making a series of standard leader assessment documents and procedures to assist clubs who wish to pursue the AAS. However at the end of the day no club will be able to completely fulfil the full AAS guidelines, which after all are aimed mostly at commercial operators.

A Possible Ray of Light

Confederation has managed to insert a category of 'Independent Participants' into the document, describing them as 'A person who possesses the skills and knowledge to participate in an activity without dependence on a leader. A person who acknowledges the inherent risk and assumes responsibility for their own safety and welfare'. This describes many club members and Confederation's view is that the AAS don't apply to such people. While this is a substantial concession, it is

nevertheless obvious that many club members join an organisation because they are not capable of navigation or do not wish to learn map and compass skills. Others are new to bushwalking and lack the knowledge to make them an 'Independent Participant'. Some members wish to extend themselves beyond their current skill level by participating in higher grade activities and many clubs accept children either as members or as parent-supervised participants. This could lead to some clubs banning 'Dependent Participants' on some activities because it is all too difficult.

The good news in all of this is that at this point in time the AAS are intended as being optional. The Introduction to the Standard states:

'NSW AAS are applicable to formal groups either commercial or non-commercial providers where a person/s acts in a leader, guide or instructor capacity to provide an organised adventure activities. This document is intended to provide a benchmark for planning and provision of adventure activities and to ensure all inherent legal obligations are met. For this reason it is important to ensure that each leader or organisation interprets the AAS for the specific group and conditions at the time of the activity.'

In other words, the Standard sets the example for which clubs should aspire, but is not legally binding. We can only hope that some well-intentioned people don't derail this and insist it become mandatory at some point in the future.

If we cast our minds back, how many bushwalkers (as opposed to unskilled members of the public wandering into the bush as if it were suburbia) have been seriously injured or killed going out into the bush? I suspect that Confederation insurance records would show that it wasn't all that many. Are we all worrying too much?

The AAS have some useful information that clubs should consider when planning activities, but ultimately it is simply too complex (and many would say unnecessary) to put into practice everything described in this comprehensive document. We should take on board the good things, but not allow ourselves to be swept into the erroneous mindset that we have to make everything in life totally safe in order to enjoy ourselves.

Someone recently referred to the current generation as the 'marshmallow' generation, cosseted and wrapped up, protected from the real world, with no responsibility for themselves and their own safety. Learning to be a confident bushwalker is the antidote, teaching us personal responsibility, problem solving skills and independence of mind, not to mention achieving health through physical fitness, the social stimulus of walking with a group and the mental benefits of contact with the beauty of the natural world. At the end of the day, we need to just get out there in the bush, enjoy our hobby and not be obsessive about risk. ♦

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Extract from Confederation Minutes

Adventure Activity Standards

Dodie Green,
President, Confederation

The AAS Project has been in full swing since May this year. To address the AAS project, the Confed's Management Committee created an AAS Sub Committee. This sub committee sought comments from clubs and compiled approximately 20 pages of comments on the Draft 1 documents.

The Sub Committee sought & achieved representation on the Bushwalking, Abseiling, Canoe & kayaking and Rock Climbing AAS Project Technical Working Groups. Through active representation, some good progress has been made. Leadership Pathways has been the expanded with the addition of Organisational Accreditation and Peer Recognition. These pathways or avenues will provide two means by which Clubs will be able to recognize Leaders for groups leading dependent participants. We have been invited to supply text for these particular pathways. Very briefly

we view Organisational Accreditation where Clubs through a formal Club process recognize Leaders and their skills, and we view Peer Recognition as an informal process in which a senior leader or group of leaders is responsible for oversight of Leaders and their activities. We suspect that there will be clubs that operate on a hybrid model.

There has been a surprisingly conciliatory and open attitude to addressing Club concerns with the AAS. There seems to be a willingness from the Project Manager to avoid the experience in other states and we hope this will be the case. We will continue to push hard for the interests of clubs.

Editorial Comment

(Polemic not discussed with the Confederation Committee) Roger Caffin

The first thing that comes to mind is the legal question of whether my bushwalking is an 'Adventure Activity'. My answer is a very emphatic NO. If some idiot wants to go on a paid bungee-jumping course down Claustral Canyon without ever having done anything like that before, then I am quite happy to have that labeled an Adventure. But when I go bushwalking I do NOT want an Adventure. I want a nice enjoyable wander in the bush. Accordingly, it is my contention that this entire shemuzzle has absolutely nothing to do with me, and nothing to do with any Club either. We should simply tell the AAS to get lost.

As for the AAS requirements, I have to totally disagree with the author about their comprehensibility, no matter what ***-speak they are written in. I have extracted some of the requirements for the first listed 'skill' from the NTIS web site for your amusement and edification, here. Please do not die laughing.

Element Performance criteria

1. Evaluate the emergency
 - 1.1 Identify and action emergency reports and signals correctly and recognise and assess emergency and potential emergency situations
 - 1.2 Seek advice from relevant people, if appropriate, when evaluating the emergency
 - 1.3 Identify situations where initial response actions are not safe or are likely to be ineffective and outline methods for reporting according to procedures
 - 1.4 Assess the possible development of the emergency situation and evaluate further potential hazards to clients and staff
 - 1.5 Assess injuries and treat appropriately
 - 1.6 Examine the situation variables
 - 1.7 Prioritise needs, including those for assistance, promptly and accurately
2. Develop a plan of action
 - 2.1 Identify and evaluate options for action

- 2.2 Utilise available resources efficiently
- 2.3 Develop a plan which balances group and individual safety with contextual issues
- 2.4 Outline the involvement of other individuals in the plan
- 2.5 Implement organisational emergency procedures and policies correctly as part of the plan of action
- 2.6 Apply occupational health and safety requirements and safe working practices in the plan of action, including selection of personal protective clothing and equipment to suit the emergency situation
3. Control the emergency
 - 3.1 Implement the plan of action using techniques appropriate to the situation and available resources and abilities
 - 3.2 Operate equipment safely and, where necessary, improvise equipment and techniques
 - 3.3 Identify and implement strategies for group control and remove clients and other individuals from danger
 - 3.4 Monitor constantly the condition of all clients, staff and others assisting
 - 3.5 Acquire and document the information required to assist emergency services, where relevant
 - 3.6 Notify, where required, emergency services
 - 3.7 Alter the plan of action to accommodate changes in the situation variables
 - 3.8 Demonstrate casualty evacuation methods where relevant to the context
 - 3.9 Implement organisational procedures and policies and legal requirements in the event of a major injury or death
4. Debrief the emergency
 - 4.1 Notify management authorities
 - 4.2 Obtain the information appropriate to be given to facility or land management authorities
 - 4.3 Debrief clients and others directly involved and make arrangements for further counseling, if required
 - 4.4 Advise clients and others directly involved to refer media enquires to a nominated spokesperson

I am serious: this is what is on the NTIS web site. I defy you to find a single item

here which has any concrete meaning which a layman could understand. It is entirely bureaucratic gibberish with absolutely NULL content. How do you assess someone for any of this in a manner useful to bushwalking? You could spend the next 10 years arguing about the meaning of these 'requirements' and still not get any agreement. Which leads me to the conclusion that all the above could ever do is to create income for the lawyers, and some nice cushy jobs for some desk-bound bureaucrats.

More to the point, the above has zero relevance to bushwalking clubs because we are ALL volunteers. There are NO clients, there are NO staff, and there are NO management authorities. Each of us on a Club walk is a free independent individual, responsible to ourself for ourself. No-one gives orders, no-one is in command.

You will note that the NTIS requirements recommend the use of a Registered Training Organisation or TAFE course and the 'services of a third party assessor'. Yeah, right. Show me **anyone** in any of those organisations with one tenth of the skills of some of the more experienced leaders in our Clubs. What this means is a *lowering* our current standards of Club training.

I guess we could paraphrase the requirements thus:

Evaluate the emergency: He's sprained his ankle - but that isn't an emergency.

Develop a plan of action: We'll take a break for a cup of tea.

Control the emergency: I'm not sure how you 'control' any emergency, but we'll take it gently for the next hour.

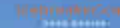
Debrief the emergency: OK, we're at the cars, shall we meet at McDonalds for coffee?

But do we need the NTIS to tell us how to do this? I think not.

I do thank Leonie Bell for the article: the matter needs a lot of discussion, and I welcome any further contributions as well.

Roger Caffin, Editor

Bert Alsup on Mount Northcott, Main Range Track, Snowy Mountains, NSW
PHOTO: SIMON ALSUP - DESIGN BY REMOTE CREATIONS.COM



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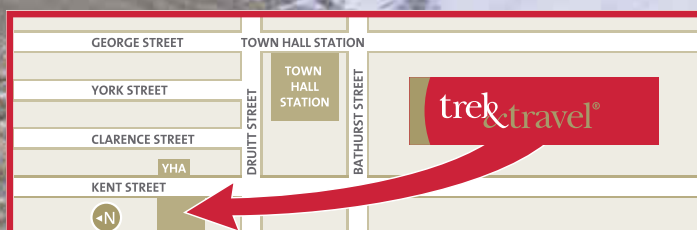
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