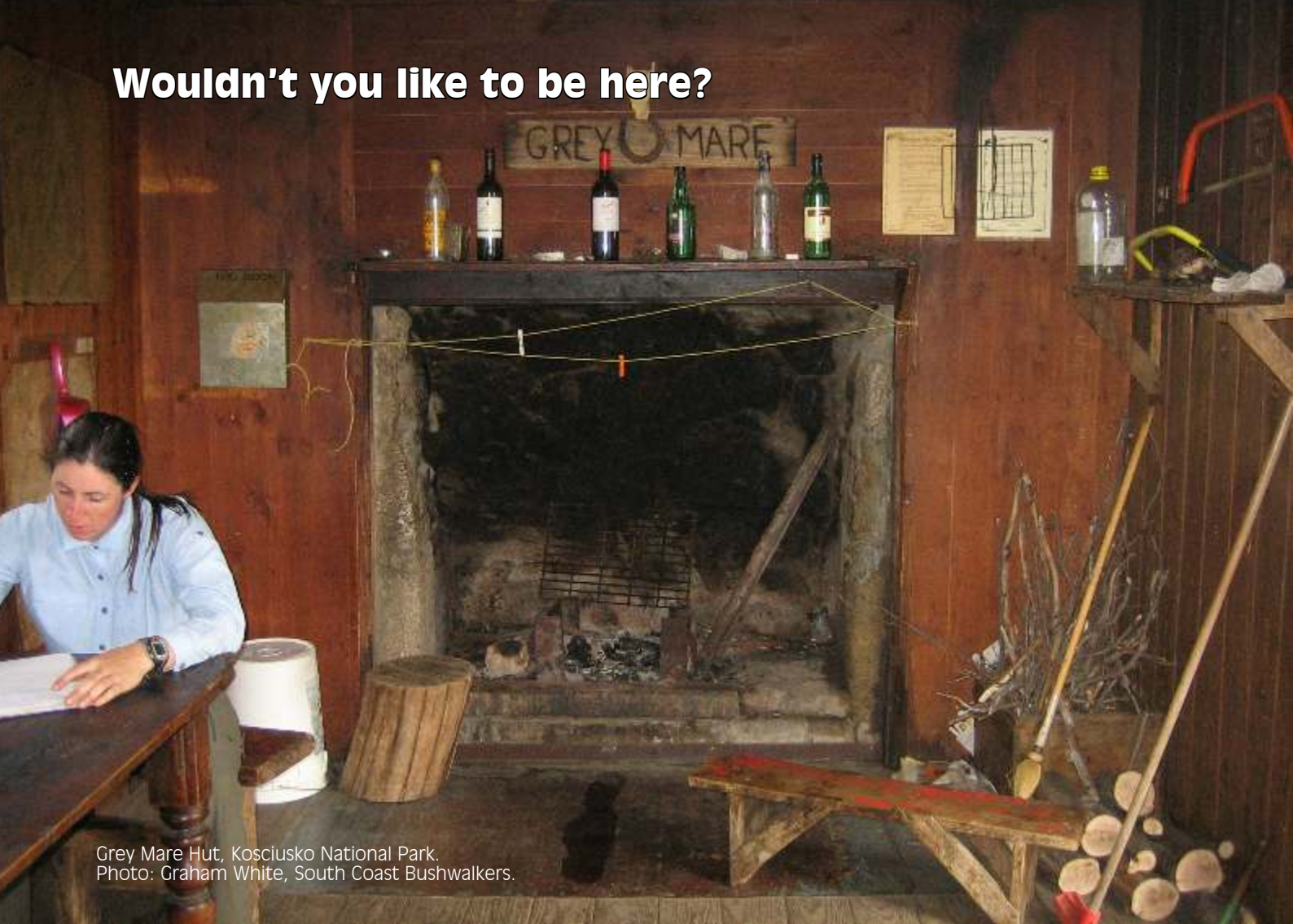


The Bushwalker

Climbing up to Riemannhaus,
Hochkönig chain

Volume 37
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Spring 2012

Wouldn't you like to be here?



Grey Mare Hut, Kosciusko National Park.
Photo: Graham White, South Coast Bushwalkers.



Bungonia Gorge, Bungonia National Park.
Photo: (name lost - if you recognise your picture, please let the Editor know and we will print an acknowledgement).

Editor: Roger Caffin
editor@bushwalking.org.au

Graphic Design & Assembly:
Barry Hanlon

Proofreader: Roy Jamieson

Confederation Officers:

President: David Trinder

Administration Officer:

admin@bushwalking.org.au

Website: www.bushwalking.org.au

Address all correspondence to:

PO Box 119, Newtown, NSW 2042

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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Front Cover: Climbing up to Riemannhaus, Hochkonig Chain, Austria. Photo: Roger Caffin.

From the editor's desk. . .

My thanks to Michael Keats for looking after the Winter issue of The Bushwalker. Without his help you might not have had anything. My excuse is that I wasn't here in Australia. Sue and I were walking the Via Alpina Purple route, through Slovenia, Austria and Germany at the time. Boasting of course, but they do have real mountains over there. And an awful lot of limestone.

On the front cover we are climbing from Maria Alm, a town in the valley, up to Riemannhaus, a club hut up on the limestone plateau. These limestone plateaus have to be some of the harshest and most lunar places I have ever seen. Great in the sun, like on this day, but slightly intimidating when there is snow on the ground and fog swirling around (as happened a few weeks before this).

Articles for Publication

I am getting a bit low on pictures for the Inside Front Cover. If you would like to see yours published, send them in. Note that I need the originals, straight from the camera and uncropped and unretouched, so we can set them up for the printing process. We need high resolution for large pictures.

Apart from that, please keep those articles rolling in. We need them. Plain text please, and again the original unedited photos direct from the camera. If you want to include a DOC file or a PDF (in addition to the plain text) to illustrate the sort of layout you have in mind, please do so as well.

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, if he can find them.

Roger Caffin
Editor

Ice Floes at Port Charcot. Read the story on page 6.



President's Report

For those who have not heard, I have replaced Dodie Green in the position of President of Confederation. We are all very grateful to Dodie for her two years at the helm and her enormous contribution.

I am looking at the organisation, past, present and future to see whether we can make some improvements. Dodie was concerned that we did not have a high enough profile to attract volunteers into the positions and some positions were not filled and some are still not filled. We are grateful to the people who do contribute, like the Management Committee members, the web site manager, the magazine editors and many of these people have been helping out for a long time with little reward.

Confederation was started immediately after the Blue Gum Forest was saved from the axe in 1932 and it was created to solve that type of problem. The problem of conservation, is now being solved very well by some large organisations like The Nature Conservation of NSW, NCC, of which Confederation is a group member and supporter. The National Parks Association, NPA, the Colong Foundation and other organisations are also doing the job very well.

However, Confederation has the role of looking after the Clubs with insurance, and representing them in many ways, e.g. developing Risk Management guidelines, having involvement in Adventure Activity Standards through ORIC and generally being a central point for dissemination of information and assistance to clubs.

We are interested in providing additional services to the Clubs. Our aim of providing more services to Clubs and to bushwalkers as a whole, is consistent with the aims of Bushwalking Australia Incorporated, BAI, of which we are a part. We and BAI want to ensure that training in navigation, First Aid and possibly bushcraft is consistent among the Clubs to improve safety and reduce risk. We might also make it easier for overseas visitors, who come to Sydney, to enjoy our natural places.

We get a Tracks and Access Report for each management committee meeting, much of which comes from the NPWS web site. However members of our Clubs will have information about tracks that we don't pick up from the NPWS site and we want to have this information so we can add it to our report. So, if any Club member sees



tracks closed, or in bad condition, please let us know.

Some Clubs that have many working members are not happy with the Personal Accident benefits. The maximum benefit is \$500 per week. Additional cover will cost more obviously and our broker is reluctant to have more than one level of benefits running. Please let us have your thoughts on this matter.

Our State Government has changed its model constitution for associations and consequently we are changing our Constitution. While we are at it, the Confederation might simplify its name from "The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs of New South Wales" to 'Bushwalking New South Wales' or 'Adventure New South Wales'.

In the absence of a state budget that allows for the NPWS to build good tracks for bushwalkers, some Clubs may wish to work on tracks on a volunteer basis. Confederation intends to coordinate track work volunteering.

The new Management Committee will look at its communications with the Clubs, web site and magazine, and their visual appearance and we might introduce a monthly Newsletter to provide more regular communications. We are still looking for a Conservation Officer, an Insurance Officer and a Training Coordinator. Surely there is someone in the Clubs who would be willing to help out with these jobs. Please let us have your thoughts on these positions or on any of the above, drop me a note via Gail at admin@bushwalking.org.au and it will be passed on. Any ideas and offers of assistance will be gratefully received.

David Trinder,
President, Confederation
of Bushwalking Clubs,
NSW



Budawang

Most of the Budawangs is a large dedicated wilderness area of at least 70,000 hectares within Budawang and Morton National Parks. It hosts several spectacular geographic features, many well known such as The Castle and Monolith Valley, some much less so. The established tracks through the wilderness are well used, visiting many of the area's features, but a side trip to nearby features usually involves extensive bush bashing through thick vegetation. A forensic study of 1974 aerial photos at a scale of 1:15,840 has focused on an area very seldom, if ever, visited and it subsequently attracted the attention of five Batemans Bay Bushwalkers for exploration.

Camping Rock Ravine is in the northern section of the wilderness. It is known on the old 1960 Budawangs bushwalking map as Crevasse Canyon. It is aptly named, a highly dissected 250 hectare maze of broken rock laced with mesas, buttes, pinnacles, crevasses and canyons on either side of a series of parallel narrow rock ridges on the southeastern point of Island Mountain. Few of these features are discernible on available maps.

It is only on the rocky ridgetops that the dense vegetation can be avoided. The rest is clothed in a very thick blanket of scrub and litter which not only slows a bushwalker's progress to a half kilometre per hour but severely restricts visibility, making it very difficult to detect the very few passes and saddles which allow progress from one valley to another. It is not a place for the faint hearted.

On this occasion the Ravine was approached from the north along the Folly Point track which had recently been trimmed by Parks staff. A rugged bush bash westward to a base camp in the Ravine proved to be only a sample of the heavy going we would experience for the next two days. Water was scarce until reaching Camping Rock Creek but a comfortable campsite was found in the gloom of late afternoon.

Next day's exploration required more intense bush bashing to the toe of a narrow rock ridge running from Island Mountain which was then easily climbed southwest. The intermittent bare rock areas on top enable faster progress. Above the thickest of the vegetation we were then able to gain our first full views of the Ravine.

At 479983 (Endrick 84 GDA), an old stone fireplace possibly twenty years old was found on the southeast toe of Island Mountain, the only sign in our four days of any previous visitation to the area. We saw no signs within the Ravine.

Having proved the route to Island Mountain we returned to Camping Rock Creek and explored nearby crevasses and

ngs Camping Rock Ravine

Ian Barnes, Batemans Bay Bushwalkers

gullies. Within the most sheltered, small patches of Coachwood and other rainforest plants survive the bushfires and droughts which historically dominate the plant growth in this area.

Returning to camp from the southwest we paused at 485986 where Camping Rock Creek, laced with potholes, cascades into is a small ferny ravine. The final push to camp was hard and required careful navigation to thread a path between a cliff line and a deep gully stuffed with boulders and logs shrouded in hole hiding ferns and heavy litter.

Our second day of exploration was more productive. A bush bash from the previous day's track at the cascades navigated us to the foot of the most likely rock ramp back up onto Island Mountain's rocky southeastern toe. As we climbed through 484983 we were able to gaze down into the Camping Rock Ravine's lower basin just before the Creek cuts through the last of the bedrock to plunge toward Munnuldi Falls, and ultimately Holland Gorge.

It was an interesting view. Although the basin was, again, shrouded in vegetation, enough monoliths, pinnacles and rock platforms could be seen to suggest more exploration of this small area, with the creek exit through the cliff line, will be high on the agenda of the next visit.

We continued our ascent, again proving a route between Island Mountain and the Ravine. We quickly surveyed the crevasses which southwestwards form a second basin of interesting broken rock. On another day we may investigate this basin as an exit from Island Mountain to the cliffs below. We headed east across flat rock dotted with dry shallow pools and were soon on the main cliff line at 482979.

Directly across from us was an impressive massive rock fall from the main cliff line. It contained house sized cubic blocks spewing down the talus to the creek. Judging the regrowth around it, we guessed the fall to have occurred within the last 10 years, perhaps less.

Some of the party with Ian Barnes above the lower basin of Camping Rock Ravine



But it was the view to the southeast which held our attention. Straight down Camping Rock Creek towards Holland Gorge was a semicircular stage containing, from left to right, the Folly Point cliff line, Castle Head, Byangee Walls, The Castle, Shrouded Gods Mountain, Mount Cole, Mount Donjon, and ultimately looking into the Angel Creek valley. A hazy Mount Dromedary lay on the coast 100 kilometres distant. It was a majestic sight. With the warm sun over our shoulders highlighting the colours of the cliff lines, the view enticed us to linger for a longer lunch.

By retracing our route through the undergrowth, taking care not to lose the trail of broken branches and trampled litter, our return to camp was much easier. On the fourth day we rejoined the Folly Point track and slogged it to the Sassafras car park, exhausted.

In summary, although daunted by the thick vegetation and relatively slow progress which can be made in this area, we had achieved several objectives. As suspected, the area proved to be dominated by rock, heavily dissected by cracking in two directions and subsequently heavily weathered to produce a valley which is chockers with interesting formations, but unfortunately largely hidden in the mystery of thick vegetation.

A short route into the lower Ravine via the Folly Point Track was established. It is possible others have been to this area but apart from the fireplace on Island Mountain we saw no evidence and found no records or literature suggesting past visitation.

Camp sites with flat ground and permanent water (all seasons, all years) are probably confined just to Camping Rock Creek, but flat



Aerial photo lower Camping Rock Ravine basin showing the massive radial cracking of the bedrock



Camping Rock Creek

ground is often limited. Possibly the best in this area near permanent water is at 485989 but others may exist. We found no significant overhangs but some could have been used in an emergency for a very small party.

A route from the lower Ravine onto Island Mountain is available via the two rock ramps described above. A descent southwest from these ramps into the second interesting basin is not yet proven. The view south from the southeast tip of Island Mountain contrasts sharply with the heavy bush bashing required to get there.

The lower basin and exit of Camping Rock Ravine deserves further exploration of its monoliths, pinnacles, crevasses and cliff lines. To enjoy such an exploration, it is possibly best done 1-2 years after the next large bushfire through the area.

Thank you to my complying, uncomplaining companions - Bronwyn, Wendy, Rudy and Jared - Ian



Antarctic Peninsula via Argentina



Iceberg Alley

Fiona Bachmann
All Nations Bushwalkers

I'd dreamt about going to Antarctica for some time. I'll travel a long way to see cute silly animals. While recovering from a broken arm I was forced to stop still long enough to actually read the details in brochures and information I'd been accumulating, rather than just look at the pretty pictures. So with enough leave accumulated, the high AUD/US exchange rate, and managing to entice my cousin Kathryn to come along, it was time to take one's own pretty pictures.

We flew to Argentina's capital Buenos Aires. It is much like Sydney, in that most of the population are centred there, with more chaotic traffic (going the wrong way!). There was an obvious remaining legacy of Eva Peron, and we encountered protests over soldiers' rights 30 years after the Malvinas/Falklands war. It probably wasn't diplomatic of me to be wearing an English Burberry pattern top – oops. Despite all this I found Argentinians to be friendly and helpful.

From Buenos Aires we took our first Aerolineas flight to Ushuaia, with about an hour delay, and the bounciest landing I have experienced. The next day we walked in Tierra del Fuego National Park, and got our passports stamped at 'The End of the World' post office. As with much of Argentina it was beautiful, displaying autumn fagus leaves, water and mountain views, beneath soaring bird life. Finally we boarded the M.V. Ushuaia and began the 950 km journey across the Drake Passage to the Antarctic Peninsula, for the last trip of the season. Antarctic

expedition cruises only operate in the summer months from November to March.

After two days of the vessel 'pitching and rolling' it was announced that "The Drake Passage had received us well". I don't think most passengers could imagine how rough it would have been had it not received us well. Over these two days we received lectures on bird life, environment, and how to dress for an Antarctic landing. Following this advice, and with fear of freezing to death, I wore thermal leggings, a thermal top, fleece pants, a polartec jumper, waterproof insulated pants (hired), and a down jacket with hood and fur trim. I also had a scarf, woolly hat, two pairs of merino socks, liner gloves under waterproof gloves, sun block, sunnies, a digital and an SLR film camera. Everyone was issued with rubber boots and life jackets and we boarded zodiac boats to explore the surroundings. I couldn't help wonder if I fell overboard whether all this gear would aid buoyancy or act as an anchor.

The first stop was Aitcho Island in the South Shetland Islands, after passing through the English Strait. We were instructed not to interfere with any wildlife and to give penguins right of way as they travelled on their regular routes. It was muddy, with ridiculous numbers of smelly chinstrap penguins. The breeding season was over, but some younger penguins were still trying to build pebble nests. The male brings offerings of shiny rocks and the female determines whether

they are acceptable, and if so they go on to build a nest home together. (Story sound familiar?)

Penguins are unbelievably cute; especially as one offered a 'happy feet' moment running over a rise towards me, letting me take its picture mid stride. They are not as clean and pure as in cartoons. They eat reddish coloured krill and spill it down their white fronts. Then indiscriminately poo for up to 50 cm straight out behind themselves. Another reason for not getting too close.

We dropped anchor again and visited Cuverville Island. Here we saw Gentoo penguins and seals, as well as carnivorous birds cleaning up any less than fortunate penguins. The afternoon included a landing at Argentina's Brown Research Base, where at 64°53'42.4" S 62°52'16.8" W we had actually landed on the continent of Antarctica, and certificates were issued to prove it. We hiked up a snow covered hill viewing the sun going down behind hills and icebergs in Paradise Bay. Some intrepid travellers, such as Kathryn, even swam in the Antarctic waters. I remained in my insulation.

The next day we landed at Port Charcot, this time seeing a few Adele penguins among the many Gentoo. Then a zodiac cruise around Iceberg Alley and up close views of an injured seal resting on its own iceberg. Birds skimmed across the top of the water searching for prey, and krill fish were visible through the clear unpolluted water. We could also see up



Happy Feet on
Aitcho Islands

Penguins on
Cuverville Island



close the intense iceberg blue, and their volume extending deep under the water.

I began to feel at home in the zodiac boats, and even thought it was great so when our zodiac drivers raced each other to return to the ship. I was also comfortable to learn a zodiac boat is comprised of an inflatable hull of multiple air-filled compartments, and virtually unsinkable. One guide related a story of having the bow bitten by a seal. Although hard to steer, all made it home safe and dry.

Another day began with a beautiful sunrise and ended with a beautiful pink/red sunset, and an avalanche that showered snow and ice particles over the bow of the boat, blocking the view from the bridge. A testament to the unpredictable variability of Antarctica. I spent much of the trip watching the way ahead and intrigued by the navigation devices, taking advantage of the open bridge policy.

Other highlights included visiting the Ukrainian Vernadsky Research Base, breaking through pack ice, watching whales surface alongside the ship, penguins porpoising, and birds doing figure eights around the ship.

We also travelled the Lemaire Channel, Gerlache Strait, and landed at Neko Harbour. We did a zodiac tour of Foina Harbour and saw the wrecks of early 20th century whaling boats that had come to grief.

Each time we embarked or disembarked a zodiac we were counted and walked through decontamination trays to clean our boots ready for the next landing. On the ship there were often treats from the kitchen when we returned. One day mulled wine, another hot chocolate. Each birthday was celebrated with a cake.

On the last day of planned activities the weather turned. As we headed for Deception Island to sail over an active volcano (but it had been quiet for 300 years), to make another landing we made no progress. The captain skilfully guided the boat through the entrance then turned around to try and find us somewhere with calmer waters and visibility. Alas, by 1 pm we still had made little progress, moving barely forward. So we began our long return across the Drake Passage.

Antarctica is a continuous photo opportunity. Whether you are a quick happy digital snapper, or the only one on the ship still using transparency film, you will go home with many pretty pictures and beautiful memories.

Antarctica is the last bastion of unspoiled land and wildlife. Maybe because it is the only continent without a native human population. It has been protected by the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) since June 1961, which defines it as all the land and ice shelves south of sixty degrees south latitude. Articles only allow peaceful and scientific research activities, and guard against international discord. I certainly hope it remains that way. ♦



Penguins at Ukraine Station



Penguins and the ship at Port Charcot

Historic Passes of Kangaroo Valley

Karen Davis,
Shoalhaven Bushwalkers

A few years ago I had the idea to visit and photograph all the trig stations in the Shoalhaven. I achieved this, visiting all 74 trigs by 2007. Everyone was then asking me what my next project would be and giving suggestions, such as all the waterfalls etc. I didn't plan on committing to any new project and suggested they pursue their ideas. But before I realised, it was happening: I was starting to visit the historic passes of Kangaroo Valley by designing walks around them. Because I have now visited 13 of the 17 passes I have been able to identify from the topo map, it has now become a project to find and walk them all.

Those who have been to Kangaroo Valley will know it has amazing and extensive cliffhines surrounding the main valley and its tributary creeks. Nearly all of the walks require getting private property permission to get through the cleared farming land below these

cliffhines. In many cases you can go up one pass and come down another. For us in the Shoalhaven these passes give access to the Southern Highland plateaus without the long drive. Three of the more interesting passes, due to their history are:

Dodds Pass

This is in the remote Upper River area. A local believes Dodds Pass was opened in the 1890s by a Trust consortium of locals who would have blasted and

dug their way down. Bullock drays used to pull the timber up the Pass for the first round of Cedar getting late that Century. At each major switchback on Dodd's there is an extended level line which the bullocks would pull the load into, then they were unharnessed and put at the opposite end of the load to continue their haul uphill in the opposite direction. This was the only access to the Upper River area until the road from Kangaroo Valley was put through Flat Rock by another logger, Harry Cramn, in the 1930's.

In the 1950's a rail track was built up the mountain by Arthur Murray - known today as Arthur Murray's Railway Incline. This separate log line up to the escarpment was built behind Dodd's Lagoon. The logs were pushed onto the flat top carriages with the help of a tractor and winched to the top of the line, where they were loaded onto trucks for transport to Madden's Mill in Moss Vale. Up to 6000 super feet of timber, 24 tonne, could be loaded on some transports.

I led a walk from the end of Upper River Road up farm tracks to Dodds Lagoon, a beautiful waterhole in a cleared bench below the cliffs, then picked up the pass track which is a lovely, wide inclined track that takes you to the top of the escarpment. Once on top we headed along the cliffhine through open grazed land until we found the Log Incline and old diesel engine used to drive the jinker on cables. Descending the incline there were more logs, jinkers, railway pieces and a bullock yoke. The descent was extremely steep but slowly do-able. It finished at a clearing where we picked up a track back to the bench at Dodds Lagoon, making a great circuit walk.



Dodds Lagoon

Ebbs Pass

In researching one of my pass walks I came across a 'Jim' who put similar walks in the Robertson Environment Protection Society's newsletter. On contacting him he supplied me with a list of all the KV passes, and more, with their co-ordinates. I met Jim when he showed us to the top of Ebbs Pass which he lives near. This pass is also in the Upper River area and nearly opposite Dodds and the area has some amazing ravines and a waterfall nearby. I loved meeting Jim as he is another obsessive, and owning a small plane he collected airstrips ie, landed on them and recorded it all in a database - even more elaborate than my trig records. The history as relayed by a local in the valley goes: 'Thomas Ebbs was the original owner of 40 acres of land below Ebbs Pass since the late nineteenth century. His brother John Ebbs had the adjoining 40 acres which is now totally re-vegetated with rainforest. The only access to Ebbs land was via the pass which I expect they constructed'.

Thomas Ebbs had cattle and he used to make butter to take to Robertson along with bootleg whisky on horseback on Thursdays. (Moonshine Trig is a short distance away on the cliff edge!) He returned with supplies in the evening, often after dark, passing the home of Arthur Murray and his wife May who lived near Carrington Falls. Thomas whistled when he arrived home safely. One night there was no whistle and the



next morning Thomas' packhorse was found standing where Thomas went over the cliff. Thomas was still alive and taken to Shoalhaven hospital but died shortly afterwards. Arthur Murray said this happened in the mid forties.

The land was left to his two nephews who farmed the land for many years living in a tin shed near the permanent creek. One of them was called to work in the mines during the war and they moved back to Robertson, saddened to leave the land. They sold the land in the mid 1960's to Robert Lambert. Robert never lived on the land but his aim was to grow trees as

he did on other properties in the area. Every six months he would visit the land camping in an old bus in Robertson whilst he was there and walking down the pass. In 1968 a savage bushfire went right through the valley and Ebbs' tin shed exploded as there was gelnignite stored there.

We walked from Jim's place down the pass to Ebbs' old property, explored the cleared areas finding old farm equipment and piles of rocks which may have been where the original house had been. We returned the same way. The pass is tricky to locate and becoming overgrown.



Above Ebbs Pass



A Ravine near Ebbs Pass

Osbornes Pass

Irishman Henry Osborne was the man who really started the dairying industry in the Valley and probably had the greatest influence in the development of Kangaroo Valley in the 19th century. He was the biggest landholder, owning over 4,000 acres in 1837. As he owned other large properties in the state he was rarely there, so he used managers and tenants. He produced butter for the Sydney market that was transported in kegs slung across pack horses, up the pass named after him, north of Gerringong Creek in Upper River to Wollongong. In his honour, the Kangaroo Valley Showground is called Osborne Park. In 1870 Allick and Isabel Osborne arrived in the Valley and they were willing to sell small blocks in the centre for churches, schools and busi-

nesses to be established. For that reason the township was often referred to as the “Village of Osborne”.

I led a walk, with much help, up to the escarpment via a rocky scramble and then along the plateau to Osborne’s Pass. This was difficult to find, then only a footpad through the cliffline and quickly lost. After contouring through tangled vegetation, we descended a distinct spur to cleared land, eventually precariously crossing the Kangaroo River back to our shuffled cars near Flat Rock. This was not a pass I would choose to repeat.

So four left to do ... and what will be next? Who knows, but I have a lot of mountains to climb and a lot of bird species to find that will keep me busy for quite a while. ♦



Arthur Murray's Railway Incline



Jinker from the Railway Incline



The Railway Incline, now overgrown

Bushwalking Videos, by Caro Ryan

Even bushwalking has gone YouTube these days. Caro Ryan, one of our contributors, has

launched a series of free videos on bushwalking. Fortunately they are not the usual absolutely

amateur productions shot with a mobile phone. I'll let her explain:

“

I'm a producer in my “day-job”, so have decided to make a series of videos on something that I'm passionate about. I've started producing a series of professionally made Bushwalking ‘How To’ videos to help people new to walking get started and be encouraged to get out there, safely.

The first one is ‘How To Pack’ and can be seen here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwo7zyiH2Os&list=UU885b3fcSEShQdz6-v8KwLg&index=3&feature=plcp>

I'm currently editing ‘Basic Food’, ‘Collecting Water’, ‘Lighting a Cooking Fire’ and ‘How to waterproof your sleeping bag’

”

However, I had better point out that downloading these takes a while: the files are quite big. On the other hand, Caro has made them available

in a series of sizes and formats, big and small. Whether you will entirely agree with Caro about what is essential and

what is not - well, such discussion is always fun. Any feedback on these is welcome.

Roger Caffin, Editor

Volleys on the Overland Track

Michael Smith,
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club.

[Editorial note: it seems that the article by Michael Keats has stirred some extra comment. I welcome such discussion, and have added a few comments of my own.]

Volleys, made by Dunlop, are a type of shoe with canvas uppers and soft but strongly gripping sole.

Traditionalists might say they would not normally be considered suitable for a 9 day walk down Tasmania's Overland Track, such as I did in May 2012. Since I have worn nothing but Volleys on all my bushwalks for the past 50 years, they



Old Waterfall Hut, Overland Track

were my first choice. I knew I would not have trouble with my feet such as blisters or sore spots due to chafing.

The strengths of Volleys are that they are cheap and light, have a superb grip on slippery surfaces, and the sensation of feeling the ground more sensitively.

Their drawbacks include no fractional

sizes (such as for wide feet), they quickly get wet, rocks can be felt through the flexible sole. The sensation can vary between sensual and a painful rumbling, and they offer no ankle support. If you wear Volleys all the time your ankles will flex over the ground, becoming more flexible, strong, and not need any 'support'. *[But the whole concept of 'ankle support' is a stupid one anyhow, with no published research to support it - Ed]*

Being canvas they become dirty quickly and stay that way. They last for about 1000 kilometres if you wear the soles right down to your socks as I do. I have heard some 'experts' say that these shoes will ruin your back. If you reject Volleys and wear something else, some people will congratulate you for making the best decision. *[I wonder what these 'experts' say about natives who don't even wear shoes? Me, I wear the rather similar KT-26s - Ed]*

I think Volleys are great, and this is what I did to make them more suitable for 9 days of mud, snow and carrying a 22 kg pack. I sprayed them inside and out with "Lanotec", a form of lanolin or natural wool grease. This allows them to absorb only about a third of the water they would normally, and it repels most of the dirt. I wore 3 pair of socks, the 'lubricant' between your shoe and your foot. Against my skin I wore a thin wicking under-sock, then 'army socks' (wool-nylon mixture), and on the outside "sealskinz" waterproof socks. With this many socks it is necessary to buy a pair of Volleys a size or two larger than normal. Without the

waterproof socks I would have suffered wet, wrinkly, frozen feet. My feet were warm and mostly dry all the time. Feet sweat, and the waterproof socks don't allow any moisture in or out. Like a wet suit, you stay warm even if you are wet.

I spent 4 days walking through snow and each night I could wring out about



Water and snow, the natural enemies of Volleys

3 mils of water from the woollen socks. I considered this condensation *[from sweat]*.

Most days I walked through water up to the top of my shoes, and mud nearly all the time. When withdrawing your shoe from snow, waist deep at times, snow works its way down between your shoe and outside the waterproof socks. I have never worn gaiters so I cannot say if they are a good idea. I wore waterproof over-pants each day. My Volleys performed well, and would be my first choice if I ever did the Overland track again. ♦

[Imho, gaiters are the absolute bee's knees in snow - Ed]

Russell's

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The Top End wet season is spectacular and, more importantly, enjoyable. This is, in many ways, my favourite time of year. This trip is a combination of some of the short wet season walks that I most enjoy doing myself.

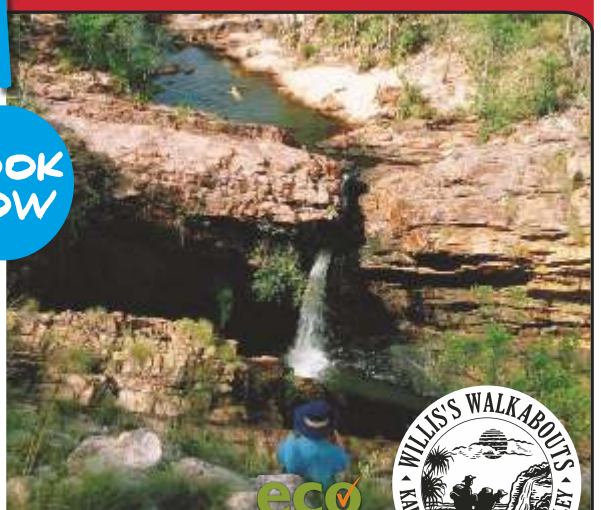
I enjoy them all so much that I'll run the trip for as few as two people at no extra charge. I've designed it to

allow participants plenty of time to acclimatise as we work our way from day walks up to longer overnights.

If you have ever wondered what our wet season is really like, you owe it to yourself to have a look at our trip notes.

Russell Willis

WILLIS'S WALKABOUTS



12 Carrington St Millner NT 0810

rrwillis@internode.on.net

www.bushwalkingholidays.com.au Phone 08 8985 2134 Fax 08 8985 2355



Bungleboori Creek. Photo: Brian Fox.

There are not many walks that I repeat. In my book, life is too short and there is so much to see and experience. For a walk to merit repetition it has to be exceptional. To attract me to it a third time, it has to be brilliant.

It was a perfect spring day, brilliantly sunny, with just the occasional fleck of cloud, very light winds developed about mid afternoon, the temperature ranged from 8 to 13 degrees. This was my third visit to this remarkable tributary creek system of the Bungleboori Creek. Within a very short distance are many and varied experiences to be had. All you need is a willingness to accept that you will get wet and just relax and enjoy a smorgasbord of nature's delights.

Our journey started at 0835, with the vehicles parked on a little used stub road off the Eastern Boundary Road of the Newnes State Forest. If all went to plan we would exit the creek system about 250 m ESE of this point. Leaving the vehicles, we started walking along Eastern Boundary Road to a point just before a rough ford crossing. This was the real start to the walk, and was marked by a plunge into the scrub that edges the banks of this stream in the upper reaches.

This scrub is an unfortunate mix of all those strappy, prickly and skin tearing flora species that provide a defensive habitat for many creek dwelling skinks and snakes. Fortunately, it extends for only a short distance. After the first of dozens of creek crossings we climbed up a small pagoda and surveyed the way ahead downstream.

Fortunately, the mix of plant species changes for the better as you descend this small pagoda and enter a more incised creek. Isolated pagodas, undercut cliffs together with a rapidly descending, convoluting and narrowing creek profile all contribute to a much more desirable place to be. The range of plant species soon diminishes to just three: King Ferns (*Todea barbara*), Black Wattle (*Callicoma*

Ethereal Canyon* ***on Bungleboori Creek***

serratifolia) and a towering upper storey of massive Eucalypt species.

The space becomes more intimate and the creek soon becomes a canyon with the cliffs exceeding 20 m. The creek bed alternates between open rocky shelves and pools of uncertain and unpredictable depth. There are a few messy spots where debris has created minor dams. There are also sections where the creek area balloons out and then constricts again.

Cut tree stumps and cut logs provide a salutary reminder that we are walking in the Newnes State Forest and that none of the amazing sights we enjoy are protected. Loggers and miners can despoil this place at any time. We continued downstream and soon came to the first of several constrictions, the most noteworthy being Thorpes Constriction*.

This very narrow part of the creek is jammed with a large, cut log about 50 cm diameter and about 5 m long. The log is wedged into a waterfall at an angle of about 45 degrees, providing a 'slippery slide' alternative to just descending into the pool below. It did not take long for most of the party to work out a way around the constriction and remain dry. I waited until the guys with cameras were in position before plunging into the water. I was not going to do a repeat performance! Joanne was the only other brave, or was it foolhardy, soul to follow my plunge and swim. The photos look good.

The water was bracing and it was well that the swim was short. The only real

issue of concern was a wet notebook that took some time to dry out enough to be useable. Immediately after this pool there is a long undercut section of the creek with a slippery flat rock bed. It is extraordinarily attractive with a variety of ferns and light reflections combining to make excellent photographs. There are not many flowering plants here and to find a specimen of the purple *Hovea longifolia* in bloom was a bonus.

We moved on downstream to where the canyon widens sufficiently for areas of deep loam to form. Great Soft Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) dominate the vegetation near the creek. Huge Coachwood trees (*Ceratopetalum apiculatum*) replace the eucalypts and the canyon becomes a magic place.

A couple more bends downstream and we enter a truly stunning section of the canyon, which is almost a tunnel. Here the water has cut through the soft sandstone at the top so quickly that it is less than a metre wide. 15 m below the rock is even softer and we walk into a spacious, cathedral like transept with light shafts falling onto several tiny areas illuminating them as special objects in an otherwise dark and mysterious place. Capturing the essence of this 50 m long tunnel is a challenge. It really needs a tripod and a lot of time, to say nothing of perfect light.

By now, Joanne and I are starting to feel the consequences of our immersion. Morning tea in the sunshine seemed a good idea. Emerging from the tunnel,



Ethereal Canyon. Photo: Peter Medbury.

Michael Keats,
The Bush Club

there is a long, curving rock undercut surmounted by towering, pagoda topped cliffs. We know this as Rodney climbed an adjoining slot and wandered around the tops while the rest of us sat in a protected sunny spot and enjoyed a snack. Joanne and I warmed up to close to normal.

Just past this point another tributary creek joins from the north. On the flat convergence area there is an unusual hemispherical rock, about half a metre in height covered all over in an Acroparus moss. This moss consists of hundreds of individual stem-like spikes up to 20 cm high, giving the appearance of a deep shag-pile carpet. I have been able to identify it to genus level. It is of the genus *Polyptrichum*, possibly *P. communis*.

There is so much beauty down here. A deep undercut of ochre coloured rock is seen glowing almost red, as sunlight is reflected from the water and bounces back. You have to be fast to capture the richness of the colours before the sun moves and the area loses that extra magic.

We continued through the Soft Tree Fern forest. Seen through breaks in the Coachwood canopy above, the cliffs are now over 50 m high and glowing orange. We are a privileged group of explorers. This journey continued with more magic and soon we arrived at a point where the creek simply disappears under a major rock block up. Rodney noticed a small opening amongst the tumble of rocks. Wearing a headlight torch, he squeezed in and disappeared. The rest of us walked up and over, and around this extraordinary area.

After about ten minutes Rodney reappeared with information that he almost reached the far side of the block up. However, while he could see light on the downside and hear water, the only exit hole was too small for him to squeeze through.

Back together again as a group we left the intimate world of the canyon and started contouring around a large bluff to the south, and high above another major tributary of the Bungleboori Creek. Sliding around the nose, the ledge we were on ran out ending in an impossible drop. We retraced our steps, descended about 10 m and tried again. Again, we were thwarted. Then I recalled a counter-intuitive slot right on the cliff edge that is a goer. This time it all worked perfectly and soon we picked up another major creek parallel to our entry creek but positioned



Waterfall. Photo: Emanuel Conomos.

about 600 m further south.

Exploring this creek was the reverse of our experience with the point of entry creek. All the way we were climbing in the creek and working upwards, so the grand beauty was seen first. Here, it was a glorious, crystal clear pool about 15 m in diameter, with a sandy bottom that can be seen through the deep, blue tinged water.

At the back of the pool, a narrow, single stream waterfall plunged about 2 m. On either side were perfectly shaped rocks, uniformly clothed in green moss. Arching above were the inward curving walls of a canyon. It is another sublime piece of natural architecture. Two, small black fish (*Glaxia* sp) were observed. On the eastern side of the pool, a gnarled and twisted tree root provided foot and hand holds to start the creek climb.

The reward after the first climb was another exquisite blue pool, this one was generally rectangular, and not as deep as the lower one. All around the perimeter, green moss upholstered the rocks and set a scene of unparalleled beauty. There was just so much visual splendour crammed into such a small distance, it was easy to become inured and desensitised. I was sure the big waterfall was further up this creek. Somehow, I got it wrong and we missed it all together.

It was too late to go back so it was decided we would exit up the next major ravine, have lunch and then drive out on the next ridge east, walk to its end, and then explore the pagodas and cliffs above the walk done in the morning. Before we had travelled much further the noise from the group disturbed a large bird that we think was an owl. When it took off the wingspan was about a metre across. Brian

managed to capture a view of it disappearing into the distance; however even with his 40x magnification lens, an ID was not possible.

Although we missed the big waterfall, which I then recalled was below the block up, Rodney did discover and photograph an amazing sight where a shaft of light refracted into separate beams creating imagery associated with Renaissance paintings. It is a truly ethereal set of images and I have called this the Ethereal Canyon.

We climbed up to the top above this canyon just past a small waterfall. This proved to be a remarkably easy ramp-like ascent. Towards the top of the climb there was a dry overhang complete with a very large dead tree growing from its centre. There was nothing remarkable about this; we have seen many such dead trees in similar situations. What was remarkable was a crack seen so often where subsurface mining occurs. Water supply



Thorp's Constriction.
Photo: Brian Fox.



Pagodas. Photo: Brian Fox.

capture caused by mining had killed this tree. Given the line of survey pegs seen close to where we parked the vehicles I suspect the culprit is the Clarence Colliery.

Further up the ramp, and in deep leaf litter, Emanuel found a very dead and bleached test of native land snail, possibly a *Meridolum* sp. Much more exciting and about 10 m further up the hill Brian disturbed a Tiger Snake (*Notechis scutatus*). This reptile was very curious about us and allowed multiple photographs to be taken. Pictures taken by Peter using a big lens are remarkable.

Nearby all this and on the western side of our climb there is a significant and solitary pagoda, an ideal spot for lunch with a stunning view east over the creek junction and beyond to Crisscross Spur. We also could see the end of the ridge we proposed to visit after lunch and relocation of the vehicles. At 1308 it was time to descend the pagoda and ascend the ridge. It is a steady climb although negotiating the scrub is a fight all the way. A section of an old road was reached at 1320 and the vehicles at 1322.

A short drive east along Eastern Boundary Road took us to a junction. From this take off point we drove south to the current road terminus. Immediately, on arrival the scenery is spectacular. The western edge of Crisscross Spur opposite, seen from here, is characterised by sheer cliffs capped with pagodas. The road terminus has its own stunning collection of pagodas and ironstone formations, and combined they are a photographer's dream. The purpose of our visit was to connect with the morning walk and take pictures from the top down if possible.

On this narrow ridge, there are several isolated pagodas separated by a dense sea of Loadstar nana and various other equally dense growing species. Just getting to each pagoda was a tough task. We managed to make it to three of the pagodas and captured some remarkable imagery. There was simply not enough time or energy left to bash through further and closer to the cliff edge. The closest I got was still 150 m short of the cliff edge. At 1431, we made it back to the vehicles and called it a day. ♦

Notes

Ethereal Canyon was named by Michael Keats after experiencing the ethereal light play and atmospherics on a Bush Club bushwalk, Monday 24th September 2012.

Thorpe's Constriction was named by the author in recognition of Ian Thorpe, a bushwalker explorer who has investigated much of this area.

Crisscross Spur trends generally south from Waratah Ridge, 300 m east of the boundary of Blue Mountains National Park to above the Bungleboori Creek. The southern end divides south west and south east hence its name. Named by Yuri Bolotin on a Bush Club walk 15th June 2012.

[These are all Club names and won't be found on a topographical map. - Ed]



From above - oh that scrub! Photo: Michael Keats.



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'Mystery Hike' Valley Heights to Penrith

Reproduced by kind permission from the Valley Heights Locomotive Museum's "The Depot Diary" 2010

In 1932, NSW Railways and a leading Sydney retailer, FJ Palmer & Sons, combined to run four Mystery Hiking Tours to various bush land locations around Sydney.

Hikers purchased a two-shilling ticket and joined a train at Central Railway Station for a mystery location.

At the end of the train journey, the hikers were met and taken on a guided hike to their ultimate destination.

The mystery hikes were held on Sundays and became enormously popular – despite protests from the Council of Churches, which argued that they somehow 'secularised' the Lord's Day!

On July 10, 1932, the mystery destination was Valley Heights. More than 2,000 passengers on four trains

disembarked and began their guided walk back down the mountains to Penrith station.

Photographer Tom Lennon recorded the mystery hikes. The photographs are now in Sydney's Powerhouse Museum*.

Former train driver and member Clive Keenan brought their existence to the attention of the Valley Heights Locomotive Heritage Museum.

The photos clearly show the informal, holiday nature of the hikes. Many of the hikers appear to be kitted out more for a picnic in the Domain than a bushwalk down the mountains! Along the way they stopped for lunch, where they were rewarded with a performance by a band that had accompanied them on the train trip up.



Locomotive 3352 stands at Sydney Terminal in charge of one of the four trains bound for Valley Heights on the 10th July 1932.



Hike participants disembark from one of the trains onto Valley Heights platform.

Submitted by Keith Maxwell



Hike participants congregate opposite Valley Heights Station on the Great Western Highway while passengers off another train make their way across the pedestrian footbridge. Pictures on the left show the walk down the mountains with stops for refreshments.



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