

# *The Bushwalker*



Berowra Waters from the Great North Walk,  
A pleasant day walk.

Volume 38  
Issue 2  
Autumn 2013



**Wouldn't you like to be here?**





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

Formed in 1932, Bushwalking NSW 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 Bushwalking Administration [admin@bushwalking.org.au](mailto: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](http://www.bushwalking.org.au), broken up into areas. There's lots of other good stuff there too, including the Australian Bushwalking FAQ.



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**Front Cover:** Berowra Waters from the Great North Walk. A pleasant day walk. Photo: Roger Caffin.

## From the editor's desk. . .

**N**AME CHANGE: The Confederation is now known as *Bushwalking NSW*. There is an optional 'Incorporated' at the end, but that is just a legalism and is not needed in ordinary use. However, I imagine that we will continue to refer to 'the Confederation' for quite some time as it is convenient.

## Articles for Publication

We are always happy to receive 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. In particular, photos embedded in DOC files are not accepted, and neither are scans of standard photographic prints - with the possible exception of historical items where the print is all that exists.

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 mandatory plain text file) 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



Admiring the vista from the summit of Mount Strzelecki 756m, Flinders Island. Cape Barron Island in the background. Mount Strzelecki is one of the Australian Classic Climbs. From sea level through at least five vegetation zones, there is nothing quite like it on the Australian mainland. Photo: Janet Morris.



## Wollemi Full North to South Traverse - Part 2

# Mohawk Mtn to Ovens Creek

Yuri Bolotin

**Day 8 — September, 2012**  
(Part 1 was in our Summer 2013 issue)



Deep in one of the gorges

*The Traverse, 279 km and 12,627 m of ascent, took 18 days in September 2012. It went from the northernmost point of the Park, about 1 km north of Phipps Cutting, to the southernmost point at Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong, whilst always remaining within the Park boundaries. Nearly 2 years went into the planning. The walk was in three sections with a food resupply between each one. Ian Thorpe (who conceived and led the walk), was*

*joined by Yuri Bolotin and Rodney Nelson on the first two sections; Ian and Yuri did the third section finishing at Kurrajong on 20 September.*

*Michael Keats and Yuri Bolotin are writing a book about this journey. In the meantime we are publishing a condensed version of 3 days on the walk from Yuri's track diaries. This is day 2. The series concludes with day 3 in a following issue.*

**W**OKE up at 0534 to another glorious but cold morning, the temperature was 4 C. We had heard lots of animal and bird calls during the evening and the night, mostly coming from the deep rainforest gorge below. In particular I was fascinated and annoyed by a loud and weirdly sounding dialog between a couple of frogs that went well past midnight. The frogs were either courting or quarrelling, I am not sure which. I thought about calling the police but it would have been difficult to provide them with our address and the nearest street corner. We had a few quiet hours during the night and now the birds were once again singing their heads off all around us.

Abundant dew fell in the early morning, and because Ian and I had been too tired (lazy?) to put up the fly after a massive day yesterday, our gear now got rather wet, particularly the sleeping bags. We even had a little fire going (something we normally didn't have time for), to try to dry some of the stuff, but finally decided that we would achieve much quicker results during the day when the sun was higher in the sky.

The positive side of sleeping in the open for me was watching the incredible sky late last night, while falling asleep. It was then that I saw probably the brightest shooting star ever – it was orange and red and took a few seconds to traverse the sky above me. Or was it a dream?

The sun was just coming out from behind the hill to our east when we set off at 0710, moving south along the same narrow ridge we had been camping on. Bearing in mind the amount of dew we had during the night, all three of us put on full wet weather gear, but so far we were not finding the vegetation all that wet. Ian said it could perhaps be because you get less dew under the tree cover.

In a few hundred metres, our ridge stopped abruptly by plunging down into the rainforest gorge below. The last time we had been here we had found a special slot that provided an easy descent, so we used it again today. We were through the slot and at the creek near the spot where we camped last July at 0730. There was a complete change of vegetation as we entered the rainforest, and the warm rays of the morning sun that had been pouring over us on the high ridge had only just started to penetrate the deep dark gorge we were now walking in.

**W**e moved along slowly but surely, now ducking under a fallen tree, avoiding lianas and creepers, now walking alongside wet, green moss covered rocks, always keeping on the right hand side of the creek. The first rays of sun were casting a beautiful golden light over us, making it all feel as though we were stepping through an enchanted forest from a fairytale.

We passed a creek junction to our right, with a narrow, sinuous gully that looked like a canyon. I wished we had



Incredible rock formations



time to investigate but we needed to press ahead. Next, we went around and underneath a headland that resembles a tadpole on the map. Initially Ian had drawn our course over the top of the it, but now we were here we realised that the sides of the 'tadpole' were in fact 50 m cliffs that didn't rate a mention on the topographical map. Such is Wollemi.

At 0810, we were at the junction of our creek with another one, coming again from the right. Our plan was to climb out of the gorge at this point, which had been identified by Ian and I during our recce. It was time to fill up with water for the day and also to shed our wet weather gear. I knew it had to be done, but the feeling of my shirt, very cool and still wet from the last night's dew against my skin was not entirely enjoyable.

At 0814, we started our climb up to the high ridge in front of us; the total ascent was in the order of 200 m. The first bit of it was very steep and involved a crawl through debris of a recently fallen tree, followed by a crawl on a tiny ledge above a fairly significant drop – all with the full pack. Soon after the scrub became less dense and we came upon a beautiful dry cave, with soft white sandy floor and two interconnecting chambers separated by a single, jagged, intricately incised column.

Things got even easier as we emerged into a drier and less inclined slope. The ridge gradually swung from the south west to the south and became rather flat, affording views of Mount Coricudgy in the distance to our north north west. Next, we crossed a large hanging swamp full of magnificent spring wildflowers.

At the far edge of the swamp, we saw wild dog or dingo scats on a small rock. Throughout the entire Traverse, we had

not seen or heard one but this proves that they are around. We continued to enjoy great views of Mount Coricudgy, the Kekeelbon Mountains and Mohawk Mountain to our north – all of them were getting more and more distant, hazier, bluer in colour with every step and were soon to become only memories.

As the old vistas were fading away, new ones were appearing to keep us delighted and amazed. We stepped on a narrow, elevated, rocky ridge that had amazing, expansive views in all directions. In addition to the landmarks to the north, we could see all the way to the south, to the cliffs and mountains of Capertee Valley, our next destination in two days time, if all went according to plan. The place was right, the time was right, so it was morning tea at 0938. We also needed to use this opportunity to dry our gear from the last night's dew. We unrolled our sleeping bags and spread them in the warm sun. They were beautifully dry and fluffy within minutes.

Morning tea was over at 1000, the temperature was 12 C, although it felt a lot warmer in the strong sun. The ridge continued to delight us. It was different to the rocky saddles of the Northern Wollemi with their orange weathered rock outcrops that form parts of the ridges. This spur was an almost flat, solid rock platform of dark brown colour, with large individual boulder pieces scattered on its surface in a very artistic and picturesque fashion. From our elevated walkway we could see that the ridges, valleys, deep gorges and pagoda fields in all directions look very interesting as well. This area is not easy to access and I am sure a thorough exploration would yield many amazing discoveries. I called this long ridge that extends for about one kilometre

Drying gear in the sun



## 25th Annual NavShield

6th & 7th July 2013

THE NSW Emergency Services Wilderness Navigation Shield (NavShield), is an overnight event where teams attempt to gain as many points as possible by finding their way on foot, through unfamiliar wilderness terrain to pre-marked check-points. The course covers an area of 80 to 100 square kilometres and only traditional map and compass techniques are permitted. The course is set by a team of skilled navigators from the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (the oldest land search and rescue unit in Australia) - the official Search & Rescue arm of Bushwalking NSW.

The course will be set in a secret location (within 2 hours of Sydney) and will take place on the first weekend of July 2013. It's an ideal training opportunity for your club members to learn and practice in a fun and enjoyable weekend. You can choose to make it as competitive or as amateur/fun as you like!

NavShield is the primary fundraising activity for BWRS, so come and support your Search and Rescue Squad, whilst promoting a great, fun event to your Clubs. Proudly supported by the NSW State Rescue Board, the event is open to rescue teams from around the world. Past events have seen entries from a variety of Bushwalking and Rogaine Clubs, Police, Ambulance, Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service, Volunteer Rescue Association and the Armed Forces.

Registrations for this year's event are now open and all information is available on the Squad's website, [www.bwrs.org.au](http://www.bwrs.org.au).





The "cow"

and provides a wonderful transition from Northern Wollemi to Southern Wollemi, Scenic Ridge.

The splendours continued. On top of the opposite spur, across a deep canyon, there was a huge rock that looked like a giant cow, perhaps 20 m long and 5 m high. This was followed shortly after by a rock shaped like a giant chicken. Walking along the Scenic Ridge, we crossed onto the Coorongoba topographical map – our 4th map out of the total of 11.

The weathered lumps of rock covering the ridge were generally dry but in many places their southern side had moisture running on the surface, nurturing wonderful quilt works of mini-carpets made of tufted green grasses and bright flowering plants. These would often be positioned next to large expanses of rusty red lichen.

A few minutes later, we came across an unexpected find in the middle of Wollemi Wilderness - several (about 10) used plastic blank cartridges scattered on the ground. These cartridges would have been fired many years ago. About a kilometre before this spot, we saw the remains of an old camp, so our theory is that the Army group that built the Army Road (which was only about 3km to our west) had their manoeuvres here in the past and had the camp we saw earlier as one of their bases.

Suddenly, we saw a tall column of white smoke coming from a ridge several kilometres to our west. The fire was burning on a steep slope in an area that was probably outside the National Park. For the next few hours, while the fire was in view, we kept a close eye on it. It didn't seem to spread any further from the relatively small area it first appeared in. We never found out whether or not it was deliberately lit.

At 1215 it was lunch time on a high rock suspended above a stunning, deep gorge framed with hundreds of high

pagodas and running south from our present position. Much further south, we had an expansive distant view of Capertee Valley, and to the south west of the Tyan Pic. The map in fact shows that the gorge below us continues for more than 2 km before joining Ovens Creek. If only we had time to explore it, but our plans for today were different. The immediate agenda was to rest and to satisfy our hunger, and the further one was to reach Ovens Creek by the end of the day. As we had had a very long and difficult day yesterday, we didn't want to do that again but rather try to have a relatively early camp.

At 1244, it was the end of lunch time, and my routine temperature measure showed a very pleasant 19 C. The area ahead of us looked particularly challenging or 'messy' as Ian put it, both on the aerial images and now in reality in front of us. First, we scrambled down onto a rocky, narrow spur to the west of the gorge we had been sitting above at lunchtime. Very soon we found that the spur is not a contiguous one and is hard to read as it has lots of 'orphan' outcrops; you climb on one of them, walk for a hundred metres or so, then when faced with an impossible drop you realise that you are actually not on the main spur but on an isolated high rock and so need to fully back out. This exercise had to be repeated several times in the course of the afternoon. Naturally, the 1:25,000 topographical map cannot give you much guidance in this terrain.

After about half an hour of doing this, we came to an abrupt gash in the spur with a 10 m drop and no apparent way to get down. Of course, there is always a way, or at least most of the time! We soon located a slot with a chockstone jammed in it about 2 m below a narrow ledge where we could just stand, one at a time. This was a little similar to one of the descents in the Northern Wollemi on Day

1. We took the packs off and, one by one, carefully lowered ourselves down onto the chockstone, then scrambled further down, squeezed ourselves underneath the chockstone that was suspended in mid-air above us and pushed our way through the slot that stopped at a tree before reaching the bottom. The scramble down around and through the tree finally led us underneath the cliffs.

The huge chockstone we had just gone under was shaped like a guillotine, with its enormous sharp blade pointing down. It was held in the slot between two rocks by friction and didn't seem all that stable. Whilst Rodney was squeezing underneath it, I asked him to pause for a photo. He complied, but for some reason it looked like he didn't appreciate my request, neither did he enjoy the experience of standing still at that location.

In the end, we all completed the descent safely, and on the way I even picked up a Sarsaparilla leaf to chew on from a vine growing in the slot. This helped in the next section as it was an ascent on the ridge that very soon became broad, scrubby and viewless.

At 1340 we took a sharp turn to the right (west) and started our descent into Ovens Creek. After about 60 vertical metres of descent the ridge we were on stopped at a sharp and very deep gully, not shown on the map. This meant we had to get down and around the obstacle, then climb back up on the ridge.

At 1418 Ian located the gully he had intended to take for the final descent and we plunged into it. The gully was steep and covered with debris and fallen rocks. Very soon it developed into a very

The rocky ridge ahead





impressive, cliff lined, broad gorge, about 60 metres across. This enabled us to choose the best course of descent by veering from one side of the gorge to another as we went down.

Ian accidentally dislodged a dead part of a tree, about 4 m long, that dropped down from above, pointing vertically at him, within a hair breadth from his head. He stepped aside nimbly, avoiding a more serious encounter with the sharp, pointy trunk. I heard a crash in front of me and watched the whole action as though in a slow motion, even though it took seconds to unravel. Phew, that was close!

We carried on. The gorge now opened even more, becoming a very pretty looking valley, lined with majestic, high trees, their shining white trunks rising to the sky from the high grasses below. The bird songs here were particularly sweet and beautiful, welcoming us to this world that most probably had never before been visited by anyone that looked like us. The descent was slow, however, because of the debris and low level scrub.

**A**t 1445, just over an hour since starting the descent, we were finally on the valley floor, in the wild, dark, moist and mysterious rainforest. Like many times during this journey, I had a feeling that this is one of the last wilderness frontiers and that we were stepping into a virgin, wonderful and unexplored territory.

Although the creek itself and the rainforest around it were beautiful, the gorge in the area where we ended up at after our descent was so full of debris and lianas that it would be impossible to have a camp there. But time was on our side today and we didn't need to look for water, so we decided to split into two parties and search for a more suitable spot.

Walking through the gorge alone accentuated the sense of wonder, wilderness and isolation. The ravine itself is not



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*Russell Willis*



Sarek National Park, Sweden

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Knife-edge chockstone

Camp in Ovens Creek



very wide or large but it is full of oversize things that fill it up – huge trees reaching for the sky, enormous rocks that had fallen from impossibly high cliffs above, thick lianas and vines that spread out over extensive areas to create an almost impenetrable mesh, the dense, high mountains of fallen debris scattered all around in a chaotic, frenzied way. Even the water in the creek is extraordinarily cold! All this gives this place an untamed, unvisited, undiscovered feel; it also makes for slow progress, wherever you move.

After a while, and with some difficulty, we found a reasonably flat area that was a little further downstream than we would have ideally liked but that would have to do us for the night. The time was 1520.

After yesterday's very tiring day and before tomorrow's planned long day, it was good to have an earlier finish. When the camp was fully set up we had a little time to look around, although it soon got quite dark – we were deep in the gorge after all. It would be an interesting area to explore further, however one would need to allow for the rate of progress being extremely slow.

During the evening, at dinner and sitting by the fire, as well as later at night, we heard many noises, screeches, bird and animal calls very close around us, reminding us that we are only visitors here. At one stage, an inquisitive antechinus came within a metre or two of our fire, had a brief look at us and scurried away into the bushes. Just in case, I had my food under my head that night. Dried noodles make a pretty good cushion.

Went to bed at 2005, the temperature was a mild 8 C. Total distance for the day was 12.1 km; total ascent was 579 m. ♦



**F**OR many bushwalkers reading about a proposal to raise Warragamba Dam by 23 metres will feel like a bad case of *deja vu*. In the 90's bushwalkers were at the forefront of the three-year campaign against this proposal — rallying around its impact on the lower reaches of the Kowmung River. Despite winning that battle, with the incoming Carr Government dumping the plan, it appears the war is far from over.

Two decades on, and despite a price tag of at least half a billion dollars, the proposal to extend the existing dam wall upwards by 23 m has been revived and now comes with powerful political backers. Infrastructure NSW took the lead, recommending the wall be raised for 'flood mitigation' as part of the 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy. Then Tony Abbott earmarked it in his '100 dams' water plan. Finally Julia Gillard pledged \$50 million towards examining the idea. The O'Farrell Government is currently considering the proposal, the Opposition isn't opposing it, and the insurance industry and land developers have gleefully jumped on the bandwagon.

Despite all this attention, no one has mentioned the plan's most obvious impact: the inundation of thousands of hectares of World Heritage Wilderness. Worst affected will be spectacular reaches of the Kowmung, Cocks and Nattai Rivers.

Much has changed in the last 20 years. The risk of a catastrophic dam failure — one of the main arguments for the wall raising — has been removed by the \$150 million auxiliary spillway. Also, the land that would be flooded by this proposal has not only been added to the National Park estate, it has also been World Heritage Listed.

**N**one of these points have been addressed by Infrastructure NSW in their recommendation that the NSW Government consider raising the Warragamba Dam wall.

Their report estimates the cost of the dam proposal to be 'at least \$0.5 billion' and recommends it be funded not by





The effect of flooding with the current dam: add 25 metres to this. Photo: RNC

# Raising Warragamba Dam Wall

Or 'Think of all that lovely loot'

Tim Vollmer, SUBW

with some added opinions from The Editor

government, but by 'users', which likely means it would be paid for through a levy on water rates, council rates or insurance premiums.

While there are many reasons to suggest this plan is bad policy, for bushwalkers the most obvious must be its detrimental impact on thousands of hectares of wilderness.

Stationary flood waters backing up behind a raised dam wall would deposit large amounts of silt and debris, coating plants and clogging waterways. Unlike short-lived natural floods, the dam would hold back the waters for weeks or longer, drowning river bank vegetation. Once the bank vegetation is killed it will lead to erosion and weed invasion.

Up to half the surviving population of the threatened Camden White Gum would go underwater during flood events, threatening the species' very survival. Extra soil stripped from the 7,500 hectares of land that would be intermittently flooded will silt up the dam and smother the lower reaches of the pristine wild rivers that flow into the dam. River banks will be eroded and the slopes will slump. This damage won't just occur in remote, rarely seen places. At full capacity the waters of Lake Burragorang would reach into the Kedumba Valley — past where the Mt Solitary walking track crosses the river — and even be visible from the Three Sisters. Vegetation scarring would be visible from the most popular tourist destination in the Blue Mountains.

Most worryingly, some of those pushing this proposal see it as an opportunity to open up low lying rural land on the fringe of the north-west growth area for urban development. If the raising of Warragamba Dam lowers the hypothetical level of the one in 100 year flood level — the level modern housing is not allowed below — huge tracts of land could be developed. Infrastructure NSW admits this, saying that approximately 8,000 residential lots and 60 hectares of commercial and industrial land have not been developed due to concerns over

flood evacuation routes. On top of those properties, their report states that there are a number of other developments currently in the planning phase where flooding constraints will be a significant factor. These proposed developments 'include more than 8,500 residential lots and over 150 hectares of commercial and industrial land.'

**C**learly the ability to open up these large developments is a major driver behind the latest proposal. Even with the dam raising, for the most extreme floods — one-in-500 and higher — the dam will offer no protection. By comparison, the flooding of Brisbane in 2011 was a one-in-1000 year event - *but it happened*. With the current rapid change in climate we can confidentially expect that soon '1-in-100 year floods' will probably happen every ten years - but the public will be ex-

pected to foot the bill for the destruction.

Essentially, a huge amount of public money will be spent on an environmentally devastating piece of infrastructure so developers can open up valuable tracts of land and make a huge private profit. Never mind the tens of millions of dollars in profits to be made from 'training mines' and such: the private profits here could be an order of magnitude greater. And all funded by the public purse.

After the Brisbane floods - which were not supposed to happen because they have flood control dams to prevent such an event, one might have wished for a greater understanding about flood plains. They flood! Would insurance companies be willing to insure the area? Very unlikely, because they are not stupid. So just like in some areas in America (eg those affected by Hurricane Katrina) there

Who cares if a bit of Cocks River gets flooded? Photo: RNC.







Putting 25 metres of flood and mud here wouldn't matter, would it? Photo: Dave Noble.

ers, we have the ability to share pictures and stories of our own experiences of some of the majestic rivers that will be damaged by this dam proposal.

Bushwalking clubs can also run walks into some of the areas that will be impacted — from day walks into the Kedumba Valley to longer journeys into the Kowmung — to broaden the number of people who have seen

exactly what environmental treasures are at risk.

This proposal was stopped twenty years ago, and it can be stopped again. There are thousands of people passionate about protecting our environmental heritage, and thousands more around the world who have experienced the wonder

will be a demand for the government to provide insurance - at a loss.

Interestingly, dam experts say the existing dam could provide flood mitigation without the wall being raised. By installing new flood gates, changing management procedures and improving flood monitoring, substantial flood mitigation could be provided at a fraction of the cost. Additional money could then be used for flood management downstream, such as the construction of evacuation routes. This offers an effective, economically sound and environmentally responsible way of protecting human life on western Sydney's flood plains.

**A** community campaign on this issue is already growing, with people from across Sydney and the Blue Mountains coming together to fight this outrageous and damaging proposal. Central to their efforts is the process of raising awareness in the community about this very real threat to some of the most significant wilderness areas in Australia. As bushwalk-

of the Blue Mountains. Together we can be a formidable force.

### Editorial comment:

**F**ar more important might be raising public awareness of the huge rip-off scam this constitutes. There's the up front cost (\$500M of public money), the subsequent huge public costs for damages when the area still floods, against the massive profits to a few private developers and their friends. We would of course never suggest that any individuals in Infrastructure NSW or in the government might have any connections to such private developers which could create any conflict of interest - just as we could rely on Ministers for Mining not having any connections to coal miners. Yeah, right. ♦

Erskine Creek—plonk another 25 m of flood in here too. Photo Paul Johnson.



## First Aid Training - 2013

### A box of Band-Aids and a couple of Aspros

If this describes your comprehensive First Aid Kit then you haven't done an accredited First Aid course as offered by Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS). All conscientious trip leaders should have at least an Apply First Aid Certificate (or better). 'Apply First Aid' was previously known as Senior First Aid. Our Instructor has permission from St John Ambulance to demonstrate splinting / bandaging not currently taught in other generic Apply First Aid courses.

BUT by the time you read this you will have missed the May 26 'Apply First Aid' course offered by BWRS. The next course after that is Sunday,

November 10. Bookings (essential) via the Internet: see the BWRS website [www.bwrs.org.au](http://www.bwrs.org.au) and follow the link to First Aid Registration. The "Frequently Asked Questions" page should answer all your enquiries about location, timing etc.

Apply First Aid training will give you great confidence to deal with simple first aid situations where an Ambulance is less than an hour away. If your bushwalking tends to take you further afield then "Remote Area First Aid" (RAFA) training is what you need. RAFA training is far more comprehensive and requires overnight attendance at TWO weekends. There



Could your first-aid kit handle this? Could your knowledge handle this? A deep cut to the bone from a ski edge, taped together with nothing more than Band-Aids and toilet paper and 3M Micropore tape. Good enough to ski out. 30 stitches in Cooma Base Hospital. The victim recovered 100%. Ed.

will be a RAFA course in October starting on the 12th / 13th. BWRS has a good Instructor so since remote area can also mean inland Australia RAFA courses are almost always full, often with many non bushwalkers.



**Never too old. . .****A bushwalk born of nostalgia**

John Giles



The view from Pisgah Rock



Walking up Erskine Creek

**I**'VE been venturing into our Australian bush since I was a small boy. Serious bushwalking, involving overnight camping began in my early twenties. In my thirties it stretched to involve caving, the exploration of the best of our unspoiled limestone systems – Tuglow, Colong, Bungonia, Cliefden, Wyanbene, Wee Jasper and others. Bushwalking has taken me everywhere, but the main focus has been the Budawangs and the Blue Mountains, the latter also serving as 'home' for more than 24 of the 51 years of my married life.

I am close to 83 years of age now and a tapering off has been necessary. A favoured rendezvous, since discovering its whereabouts in '94, has been Dadder Cave in the Erskine Gorge, lower Blue Mountains. It boasts a fascinating history which can be read about in "A History of the Blue Labyrinth" by Bruce Cameron (privately published 1992). I was 64 when I first visited the cave and last year made my tenth and probably final visit. Not a long or demanding walk – as I still contended on my ninth visit 9 years ago! – the trek there and back has frequently been completed in one day. But an overnight 'stop-over' is what makes the visit especially worthwhile – gives it point, purpose and colour.

For Dadder Cave must rank as the best 'camp cave' of my experience (and there have been many). A flat, sandy floor, an overhang that means adequate protection from sun, rain and wind, a nearby, unpolluted water supply (Erskine Creek itself), a lush surround of vegetation, firewood aplenty and a superb rock fire place, first constructed possibly 100 years ago! Just after the turn of the century (early 1900's) the Hall brothers, Duncan, Machin and Lincoln (sons of a local Methodist minister) ventured into these parts, found the cave, named it – in

honour of a Death Adder snake killed within its precincts – and established the place as a rendezvous and refuge for their further adventures and for generations of bushwalkers to come. I tell everyone it is one of my favourite places in the world, and I am serious in that. So sad, then, that I doubt I will ever see it again.

Now, for the uninitiated: how to find Dadder Cave? One motors out from Glenbrook into the National Park, follows the fire trail through to the Oaks Picnic spot, a swing left headed for the Nepean Lookout. After some kilometres the Pisgah car park appears on the left. Here the vehicle is abandoned and an easy 700 metre walk is taken on a good track, bringing one to Pisgah Rock and an impressive view of the Erskine gorge. Here the easy walking ceases. The best descent is made away to the right and off the end of Pisgah. It is known as Tierney's Trail. It is a craggy descent, not too dangerous if taken carefully. At the bottom a distinct trail leads steeply down to the junction of Erskine, Lincoln and Monkey Ropes creeks (the Erskine being the main stream). One now moves upstream on the Erskine, keeping to the right hand bank until a crossing can be made. There is a trail of sorts. The point of crossing varies for me each time, and it depends on the creek's water level. Once over, the trail-less walk cum scramble continues up the left hand bank for a km or two until the cave is stumbled upon – and there can be no mistaking it, once there!

**N**ow, these instructions are limited, but interested parties can make further enquiries for themselves.

My May 2012 excursion, this last visit to the Erskine, was in the company of my

son Peter (47), my brother-in-law Alan Irwin (73) and a bushwalking friend of the years, Paul Johnson (62). We were all relatively fit, but I quickly became aware of my loss of mobility and the rock hopping proved arduous. Nine years since my last visit had certainly made a difference! I persisted, and my companions were a tower of strength, supportive both physically and mentally.

**T**he return journey the next day saw me a little more resilient, and that in spite of a damaged knee from a fall. For the first time ascending Tierney's Trail I was grateful to have someone take my pack and heave it up to me once I had made the unladen climb. But I have to say – the whole trek and accompanying camp-out was not only safely accomplished but thoroughly enjoyed, with constant humour and no little ribbing from my 3 companions, laughing at this old codger still insisting on seeing himself as a bushwalker at 82 years of age!

Dadder Cave boasts a logbook in which I have made many entries. The original volume is now safely ensconced, I believe, in the Mitchell Library. On the morning of our departure I sat ruminating, trying to decide what best to write in the log book. I was distinctly heavy-hearted, conscious of how in old age one must constantly be saying 'goodbye'. This is especially traumatic in relation to people, but it applies to places too. Saying goodbye and thanks to this little corner of our timeless land, this place of distilled peace, of visual and audible magic, proved very hard.

At least I have my photographs, and, above all, my memories, and those who shared them with me. I can only be grateful. ♦

Photos: Paul Johnson



John, with his old bushwalking gear



Dadder Cave, with friends



Tierney's Trail, down from Pisgah Rock



# Grand Canyon, Blue Mountains

Yvonne Lollback,  
Springwood Bushwalking Club

It wasn't so much a club walk as just a group of friends, mainly from Springwood Club - but that's true for many club walks anyhow. We did have one 15 year-old girl with us who had only done a little abseiling and never gone into a canyon. She was the granddaughter of another participant.

**T**HE young girl baulked on the abseil every time she looked down: she just kept freaking out at the height. Eventually a member of the party climbed down to her and slowly coaxed her to the point of no return. Once he got her over the lip to where she couldn't pull back anymore, then she was fine. The look of sheer joy on her face, of knowing she'd broken through her fear barrier was worth a million dollars. Still shaking she threw her arms around everyone in sight.

This is one of the pleasures of bushwalking and canyoning - taking people who have never done these sorts of things before and opening up a whole new world for them. No doubt many of us can remember a certain person who did that for us. I also think the chance to face your fear and conquer it is an invaluable lesson in handling life's problems in general. I hope every person, especially every young person, gets a chance to do this and I feel we oldies, who have a passion for the outdoors, are in a unique position to do this.

We did this canyon last summer before the rain made canyoning impossible. The day was perfect, weather-wise and the canyon at its best with beautiful light filtering through. Every corner revealed another fantastic vista. A trip at night is worth the effort too as glow-worms are everywhere. You might even strike fireflies late in December.

Once back on the tourist track, the gorge is so beautiful with a lot of work being done on the track by the National Parks people.

Heading down the canyon

Errr - straight down?







The abseil from below

Sunlight into the canyon



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# Devils Throat and the Cliffs of Camp Creek

Michael Keats, The Bush Club



Climbing to the top of the Devils Throat,  
Photo: Brian Fox

[A lot of the place names used are unofficial and belong within The Bush Club. The target is roughly at Cullen Bullen 430 072. Access is not easy through the cliffs - Ed.]

When I named the Devils Throat on a Bush Club walk in March 2007, and looked down into the awesome void from the cliffs above the encircling amphitheatre, all attempts to descend the eastern cliffs of Carne Creek to inspect it at close quarters had proved impossible. What the walk today proved was that access via the western cliffs, and crossing East Creek was possible and the unique geomorphology of the Devils Throat could be experienced up close.

The Devils Throat is a challenge to describe. It is part canyon at the top, however near the cliff edge a very deep sinkhole has been cut by Camp Creek into a vertical cylinder to a depth of about 15 m. At the base the force of the falling and swirling water has found a zone of weakness in some horizontal strata and removed this, creating a 'mouth' from which water flows out onto a sloping apron. The force of water has also over deepened the sinkhole below the mouth creating a pool estimated at more than 3 m deep. Up close, the noise of the falling water is an assault to the ears. The feature has an aura making it a world class example of its kind. This feature, like so much of the Carne Creek catchment, is not protected and urgently requires transferring to The Gardens of Stone National Park. The Devils Throat is a feature of international significance.

A high point at GR 422 072 on a trail bike track defines the point where we headed due east. Each step east revealed increasing views of the cliffs of East Creek, so by the time we reached the cliff edge the view was stupendous as the complex cliff lines of the Devils Throat annex created a composite image of sequential pagodas and amazing rock sculpture. Even the topo map shows the cliffs here as 34 m high. We stopped here and just savoured the view.

About 30 m further to the south there is another viewing platform where more than a kilometre of East Creek imagery is a wonder.

Next how to descend? Hidden away between the soaring pagodas there is a way down, albeit with a few small slide and jump sections. In less than half an hour we were crossing East Creek and fighting our way through flood flattened ferns on our way north to where Camp Creek and East Creek join. The Camp Creek – East Creek junction area is relatively large and there was plenty of room for the party to spread out and enjoy morning tea. I spent some time gazing up at the cliffs to the immediate north, as they looked scalable. They certainly looked no more intimidating than the cliffs we descended to reach East Creek. After a leisurely 11 minute break we started walking up Camp Creek.

Camp Creek in the lower reaches meanders from one side of the valley floor to the other, making multiple crossings necessary. The Devils Throat feature is nearly 500 m from the junction in a direct line and considerably more in actual distance as you negotiate the multiple bends as it wends its way. We shed our packs here so that we had greater ease of movement. A taste of the good things to come is a small complex of waterfalls at GR 429 075, where we spent quite a few minutes clambering up adjoining boulders to get the very best pictures. Getting around this feature involved a sloping tunnel crawl or a tight chimney option. Most of the party opted for the tunnel crawl.

In the final section of the narrowing gorge, immediately before the enlarged amphitheatre terminus, there is a large cavern, tens of metres across together with several smaller ones. It is an area of unrivalled magnificence. In the lower sections of the floor of the large cavern is a carpet of Hornworts *Phaeoceros* sp. These amazing organisms are rarely seen in such profusion.

It was just on 1130 as we rounded the last bend before the shimmering, inflated apron of the outflow from the Devils Throat came into view. Everything about this site is special. The foot of the apron has a series of very large negotiable boulders. These provide stepping (hopping) stones across the apron to the western side of the amphitheatre and the negotiable route to the base of the throat. The way up is over slippery rocks, some flowing with water. All around is sculptured sandstone. There are scooped pools that are like baths; shallow basins that in mid summer would invite a swim; there are treacherous sections where a false move would see you toboggan uncontrollably down the water slide.

Then there is the noise of water crashing down as it discharges from the contorted canyon at the top into the cylindrical tube of the Devils Throat. Going up closer there is this amazing horizontal slit where the falling water can be seen as a perpetual curtain before it races down the slope and over the apron. The slot is perhaps 4 m long and half a metre wide. It is very hard to photograph and capture the totality.

Stepping carefully around to the eastern side of the first pool below the mouth, it was possible to take pictures looking down the apronlike water slide. It was also possible to photograph the towering cliffs above. Through the camera lens, I spied Brian who had climbed up to the lip of the sinkhole to take pictures of the wild water inside. We would all go up with some assistance so that we could look inside this rock and water wonder. The slope up was so slippery that even good gripping shoes were not enough to hold you in place.

With Brian and Yuri supporting me from below, and grasping the rock lip of the former sinkhole with one arm, I fished the camera out of my pocket and took a series of pictures. The top section where Camp Creek briefly becomes a canyon is wild with white water swirling and churning before it plunges 15 m or so as an almost solid sheet into the cylinder section. This is what we had come to see, a unique natural wonder.

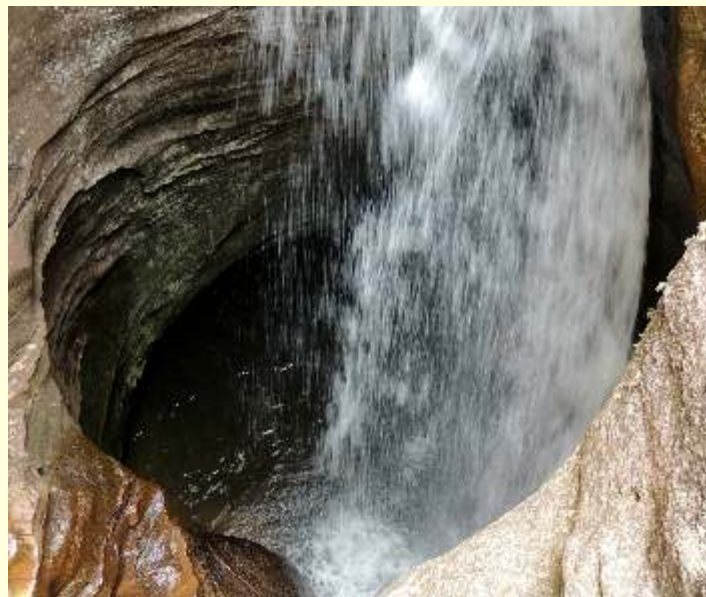
Leaving was hard because this place has a compelling fascination of its own. But we did have to move along so after nearly half an hour of total enjoyment we reluctantly started the walk out. The tunnel crawl was reversed, the packs were retrieved, and we headed up and out.

## Footnotes

Camp Creek has its headwaters on Waratah Ridge at 425 020 and flows generally south for 5 km passing through Murrays Swamp. It then generally winds in a westerly direction between Fire Trails No. 1 and 2 until it joins Carne Creek at 425 071, Lithgow and Cullen Bullen Maps. Named after the road, Camp Road, which in turn was named after the old Newnes Afforestation Camp, by Michael Keats on his Bush Club walk 7th March 2007.

There is a great deal of confusion about the naming of Carne Creek above the junction of two of its major tributaries at GR 423 077. The topographic map names the tributary entering from the west as Carne Creek. The other tributary is unnamed but has been called East Creek by the coalminers.

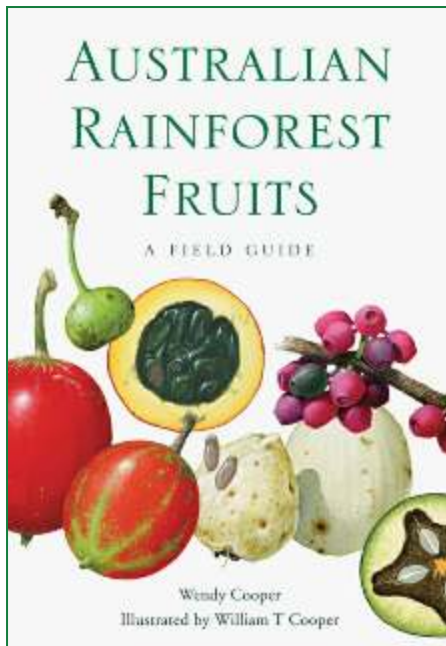
Devils Throat: so named as the water rushing down Camp Creek enters a circular 2 - 4 m diameter shaft of about 15 m in height and pours out at the base via horizontal slot hole in the rock before cascading down another 15 m drop. It is if the devils head is upside down and water pours down its throat and out of its mouth. Named by Michael Keats on a Bush Club walk, 22nd March 2007.



Looking straight down inside the Devils Throat. Photo: Brian Fox



# Book Reviews



## Australian Rainforest Fruits - a Field Guide

Wendy Cooper  
Illustrated by William T Cooper

CSIRO Publishing,

ISBN 9780 6431 0784 7

A remarkable book, and a pure 'field guide'. It is divided into 4 main sections plus an extensive index. The sections give the colour of the fruits: pink/purple, blue/black, red/yellow, and green/brown.

The format is quite simple: the left hand side gives the name and some technical description of a fruit, while the right hand side gives glossy photos or drawings of the fruits, with scale marks. There are usually six fruits per page.

I had no idea that Australia has that many brightly coloured fruits! Granted, they are rainforest fruits so you won't get that many of them in NSW, but the text does let you know the distribution for each one so you can see if you are likely to find them around. yes, some do occur around NSW.

I had hoped that the book would tell me which ones are edible, and when. Instead the author gives a very clear warning: many species are extremely poisonous and we strongly advise that none should be tasted without expert advice. Ah well.

The book can be bought at from CSIRO at <http://www.publish.csiro.au/> for \$59.95. It is also available from a whole range of other outlets, including many of the usual web suspects.

Roger Caffin

## The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond

Book 3, ISBN 9780 9870 5462 3

Micheal Keats and Brian Fox

This is book 3 in the rather large series of Guide Books planned by Michael and Brian. Glossy paper with good print and lots of very nice colour photos all through the book. It covers the general Gardens of Stone area, with trips up Donkey Mountain, all around the Carne Creek gorge, the Glow-worm tunnel area and a bit north of that, even up to Mt Cameron. Most of the walks are single-day walks, with a few overnight trips as well.

The format for the 'guide' part is a series of actual trip reports, rather than a set of route descriptions as found in most European guide books, so you get a lot of Michael's enthusiastic descriptions. At the end of each walk there is a list of times and GRs.

The section on Donkey Mountain is brilliant. The top of the mountain is an incredible sandstone pagoda place with hundreds of features and high resolution sketch maps for them. The features have all (mostly?) been named, many by Geoff Fox, who assisted the authors with this section. Access to Donkey Mountain is still OK, by arrangement with land owners and/or the Emirates Resort.

Also included in the book is a quite long section on the history of the area, with chapters covering aboriginal history, early white settlers (some of whom were rather bloody-minded), and a few comments about the modern politics surrounding the area as well. The latter mainly focus on the coal resources underground and the authors' opinions are quite clear:

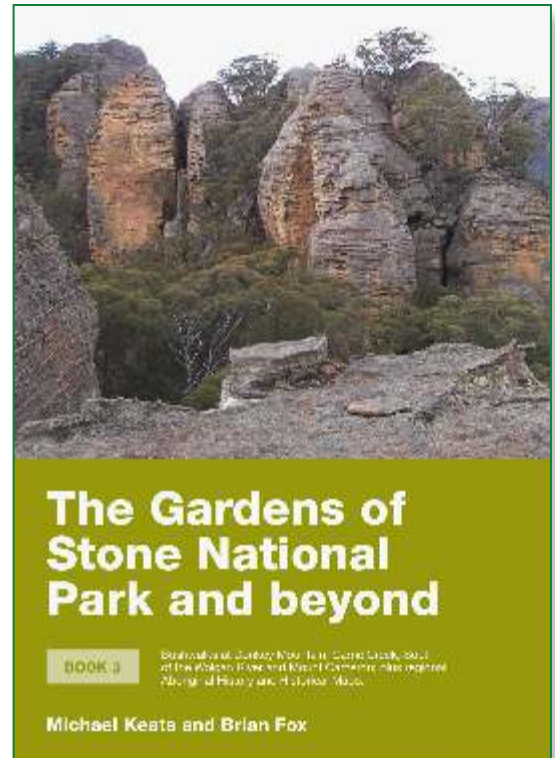
'The political reality is that royalties from 'king coal' lurking hundreds of metres below the surface, fund the mendicant state of NSW distorting and dictating government's decisions to the detriment of our heritage.'

Indeed.

There's a large index at the back, along with extensive lists of references, maps and bibliography. Mind you, some of the maps and reference go back to the 1800s.

The biggest problem with this area is in fact the very long drive from Sydney. If possible, making it a weekend trip with a base camp is a very good idea.

'Copies are available from Blue Mountains book shops after Wednesday 20th March 2013 or direct from Brian or myself. Cost is \$50.00 per copy plus postage. This volume includes 20 walks to Donkey Mountain, contributed by Geoff



Fox, as well as walks to Carne Creek and the area south of the Wolgan River. Aboriginal history and historical maps make this a very handy reference book. A-5 format, 448 pp in full colour throughout.

Limited numbers of copies of Books 1 and 2 are still available.'

email [mjmkeats@easy.com.au](mailto:mjmkeats@easy.com.au)

Roger Caffin

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