

# ***The Bushwalker***



**Pugilistic Creek, Kosciusko National Park.  
"Sub-zero in March"**

**Volume 38  
Issue 1  
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**Wouldn't you like to be here?**



Rare female Honey Possum with babies in pouch, Mt Chance (WA) campsite on Bibbulmun Track. Photo: Nancy Ainsworth, Watagan Wanderers



Karen Davis at Wineglass Tor above the Great Horseshoe Bend in the Shoalhaven River. Photo: Brett Davis, Shoalhaven Bushwalkers



**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](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 bushwalking FAQ.



## Index

Wouldn't you like to be here?	2
From the Editor's Desk	3
President's Report	4
Hailstorm Retreat	4
Letter to the Editor	6
Wilderness Vandalism	7
Shelved in Kalang Canyon	8
Wilpen Creek to Widen Balcony	9
Kosciuszko Can Wait	13
Hydration Packs - the case against	14
Book Review	15

**Front Cover:** Pugilistic Creek, Kosciuszko National Park. "Sub-zero in March". Photo: Roger Caffin.

## From the editor's desk. . .

**F**IRST, an acknowledgement. In the last issue I had a picture on the inside front cover of a walker in a gorge, but I had lost all the details. Karen Davis wrote to me to tell me that she is the walker, the photographer is her husband Brett Davis, and she is in Bungonia Gorge. They both belong to the Shoalhaven Bushwalkers. Coincidentally, one of the photos opposite is also of Karen, but in the Budawang.

Another bit of amusement concerns the Totem Pole. You will find what looks like another photo of Michael Keats by the Totem Pole inside - but it is actually someone else. They went there after reading Michael's story.

My wife and I have not done much walking recently: what with Sydney hitting a record 45.8 C and the Shooters Party about to be let loose in National Parks, we have felt a bit inhibited. I wonder: just how many walkers and clubs are going to feel worried about their safety? I understand that the Confederation's Insurance Policy may have to rise a considerable amount due to the shooting. Sheer total utter madness - and the basest of political deals. It stinks.

David Springthorpe of the CMW has sent a page from their Club magazine advertising the availability of new copies of the Budawang sketch maps. I thought this might be of general interest.

## 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



Turtle Rock — just one of the many amazing pagoda formations that were seen by the team of intrepid bushwalkers who completed the Wollemi north-south traverse in 2012. Story page 9.

## President's Report

**I** HOPE Club members have been able to get out into the beautiful outdoor places despite the recent park closures and fires.

Since my last report the national bushwalking organisation BAI (Bushwalking Australia Incorporated) held its conference at Narrabeen on the northern beaches of Sydney in November. The President, David Reid from Victoria, stood down and was replaced by a New South Wales representative, our past state President, Dodie Green. We congratulate her on that role and we are sure she will progress the aims of BAI well. These aims are to support and encourage the states.

BAI instigated a national training survey to which 54 Clubs responded; the findings are summarised below.

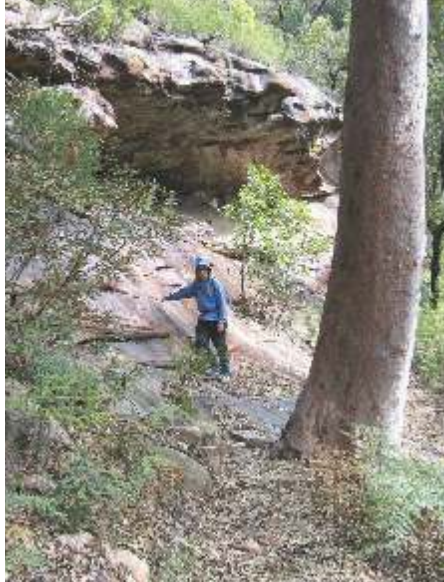
- Over 50% of Clubs have no formal training programs - (this must adversely affect safety outcomes)
- Clubs don't want to pay for training
- The Clubs that do training want to run their own programs
- Most prefer outcomes-focused training to build competence
- Most Clubs are clear about what they think should be included in leader training

A Training Working Group with 2 NSW representatives was established to investigate the development of an online curriculum for Clubs to use if they wish. BAI or the state Confederation is not going to impose training requirements on Clubs.

Insurance was discussed and will be made more efficient. The payment program will be

- Clubs to declare membership on 1st March
- Invoices will be sent out by the broker on 1st July
- Insurance money is due on 30th July
- Broker is paid on 20th August

The NSW Confederation Management Committee still needs people to fill 4 positions: *Conservation Officer, Tracks and Ac-*



Great North Walk, on the way to Brooklyn

*cess Officer, Training Coordinator and Insurance Officer.* At the same time some of the current members have busy work lives and are having trouble getting to meetings and it is difficult for representatives of country Clubs to participate on the Management Committee. We are planning to start holding meetings by teleconference. A telephone meeting might start at 7.30PM and run for 90 minutes. This should allow country Clubs to participate, it might help people to fill vacancies and help current members.

Confederation is planning to participate in the Australia-wide Great Australian Bushwalk (GAB) on 3rd March. We propose the walk to go from Cowan Station to Hawkesbury River Station (Brooklyn) on part of the Great North Walk track. We have explored the route and plans are underway. We are hoping that most nearby Clubs will send a group. We also want to encourage non-club walkers to join in and we are looking for a sponsor to help with publicity.

Many young people are joining bushwalking "Meetup Groups". The organisers of these groups sometimes require a fee and do not provide PA or PL insurance or the vetting of leaders. They are based on Social Media sites and they are in "our space" and some Clubs might be affected by losing or not gaining young members. I would like to hear your comments.

Some Clubs have concerns about standards being imposed by ORIC and the federal body AAS. Confederation has taken on the threats that could have made our lives hell and by working with them have achieved standards that we can live with.

It appears that Clubs that are prepared to pay more for better Personal Accident insurance cover are in the minority. In most Clubs a majority of members are not employed. Our insurance broker might be able to give us a 2 tier system.

*David Trinder,*  
President, Confederation  
of Bushwalking Clubs, NSW

[Photos: Roger Caffin]



Great North Walk, Jerusalem Bay

## Hailstorm

Michael Keats  
The Bush Club

**R**ICK Jamieson's book, 'Canyons Near Sydney', 5th edition includes an excellent sketch map showing the relative disposition of a series of canyons and slots draining into Bungleboori Creek along the northern bank from Waratah Ridge. Ten canyons are depicted (Scatters, Dead Log, Arch, Four Dope, Deep Throat, Cannons, Whip Bird, Bridge, and Bjelkes Mind), plus the romantically named Hailstorm Retreat, located between Scatters Canyon and Dead Log Canyon.

Hailstorm Retreat is a discontinuous rising slot that provides an excellent access to the Bungleboori Creek from Waratah Ridge. Rick insists on referring to Bungleboori Creek as the 'Bungleboori South Branch', and Dingo Creek as the 'Bungleboori North Branch'. However, this terminology was officially changed by the NSW Geographic Names Board, 29th September 2006.

Although this was my third visit to Hailstorm Retreat, it is an experience that merits return visits as it is, from a geomorphologic point of view, very special. Essentially the Retreat is a 300 m long, variable-width, negotiable slot cutting through 140 m of vertical cliff. It starts at the bottom as a dry tumble of rocks on the north bank of the Bungleboori Creek.

Initially the slot alignment wanders a bit from side to side before becoming a defined, north-south oriented watercourse. Sections of the Retreat are narrow, vertically-sided slots, connected by 'V' shaped ravines, reflecting the differential hardness of the sandstone sequence. There are two narrow slot-like sections in the length of the Retreat that make for dramatic pictures. In one of these slot sections a Coachwood tree has grown, creating a constriction which becomes more challenging each year as the tree grows. Negotiating this tree requires wriggling through a gap between two exposed roots.

**I**t was a warm and humid day, with an extensive cloud front building to the south early in the morning and by 1100, it had moved in and covered the entire visible sky. Humidity was high but largely offset by a rising breeze. At lunch time the breeze was strong enough to cause several members of the party to seek shelter. The temperature ranged from 17 to 23 degrees.



# Retreat

On the day the walk commenced at 0838, at the barrier on the Waratah Ridge Road, located on the boundary of the Newnes State Forest and the Blue Mountains National Park, GR 479 027. The old road was followed for the next 13 minutes to GR 494 020. Here we struck south following a spur, initially climbing a few more metres to spot height 1014, then descending along a subsidiary spur to the south east. Occasional pagodas appear on the ridge top, these becoming more pronounced as the ridge descends towards the Bungleboori Creek.

**M**orning tea was taken at 1001, GR 503 010. This spot was a low ridge capped with an amazing collection of erosion residuals, tabulate on top, but separated by 'windows' and 'pillars'. It provided an attractive foreground for composing pictures of the Bungleboori Creek drainage, various cliffs and pagodas. The immediate surrounding vegetation was dominated by lavender pink *Kunzea capitata*, various colour forms of



Brian Fox with ironstone formations above Hailstorm Retreat

*Leptospermum macrocarpum* and occasional flowers spikes of the Tufted Blue Lily, *Thelionema caespitosum*. The incidence of relatively large open areas of bare rock made this a very pleasant stay.

On resumption the descent towards the Bungleboori Creek accelerated and several cliff lines were easily breached as we sought out the easiest ways of route. Successive ramps and broad, open ravines made our descent a joy. There was no call for setting or using a hand line, as somehow we picked a near perfect route. By 1037, we stood on a ledge about 10 m above the Bungleboori Creek.

This ledge curved to the north east, and led to a further, pleasant rainforest descent into the bottom end of Scatters Canyon, GR 507 008, about 50 m from the junction with the Bungleboori Creek.

Clambering down into Scatters Canyon revealed wonderful clear pools and moss covered rocks within a classic Coachwood forest. Reaching high above on the eastern side, sandstone cliffs guard the junction area of a sandy beach, and if you went the quick way, also a deep pool. This was easily circumvented by a short walk. We were now on the Bungleboori Creek.

Moving downstream towards Hailstorm Retreat requires constant crossing and recrossing of the Bungleboori Creek to avoid deep pools. Even with wet feet plus, this activity was no hardship as the creek is delightful and very photogenic. On a large fallen log an Eastern Water Dragon, *Physignathus lesuerii*, was poised, waiting for passing insects. It posed for photographs like a paid professional.

**W**e continued our journey, crossing sandbanks, climbing boulders, enjoying the sunlight playing on deep green pools, capturing images of caves and overhangs, richly decorated trees and so

much more. Our Bungleboori walk was about 300 m and over all too quickly. It is a journey to savour. At 1129 we reached the spot where the ravine that is the discharge point from Hailstorm Retreat connects with the Bungleboori Creek.

The setting is a superb Coachwood tree filled glen, positioned on a bend with the opportunity to take hundreds of stunning photographs. Accordingly we tarried a while here before commencing the ascent.

When we did get moving progress up the ravine was rapid, initially over a small area of rock scree, followed by a series of



Hailstorm Retreat



Climbing up Hailstorm Retreat



ramps and small ledges before the start of the first parallel sided slot that marks the beginning of the Hailstorm Retreat. This is at GR 510 007. To really enjoy the walk through the slot you need to take time and look both ahead and then behind, and very often above as well. It is a continually changing view. We took just over half an hour to complete the ascent, stopping frequently to take photos and just enjoy the total package that nature had on offer. While the walls and floor of Hailstorm Retreat are home to a broad selection of ferns and epiphytes, there is a particular fern species that flourishes within the Retreat, namely *Leptopteris fraseri*.



Eastern Water Dragon, Bungleboori Creek

**T**he top end of the Retreat is marked by a pagoda, at GR 510 012. It has a commanding position with views west over the catchment of Scatters Canyon, and a short unnamed ravine between Scatters Canyon and Hailstorm Retreat. This unnamed ravine has on its western side a significant ridge. We plan to construct a walk to visit both the ridge and ravine during summer.

The pagoda at GR 510 012, was selected as a good spot for lunch. As stated earlier, the breeze was now quite strong, the clouds threatening rain, so lunch was somewhat hurried. The walk up to the ridge was easy, although there is no defined track. En route we found a fine example of one of the less cryptic native cockroaches, *Polyzosteria limbata*. With some coaching, it posed for the photographers. A few drops of rain fell, and then the clouds seemed to disperse.

The ridge walk was through about a kilometre of open forest. There was not much of note to observe apart from a *Grevillea*, *Grevillea sericea*. At 1311, GR 509 0238 we intersected with the eastern most section of the former Waratah Ridge Road, which is still in excellent condition despite it being locked to wheeled traffic some years ago. Once on this road, our pace picked up and in five minutes we made it to the next road junction at GR 509 028.

**T**he road section to spot height 996 is characterised by many specimens of the Native Currant, *Lep-tomeria acida*. Many bushes had ripe fruit and I enjoyed eating a few. At 1340, we reached the site of the former vehicle parking area, GR 498 022. From that point, it was a very brisk pace back to the vehicles. Several small Mountain Dragons, *Rankinia diemen-sis*, out sunning themselves scuttled across our path as we moved through. The total walk distance was 12.1 km and the total ascents 468 m. ♦



In the lower end of Scatters Canyon Creek

## Letter to The Editor

Hi Roger,

I'd like to make some comments in response to the President's invitation to do so, in his report in the *Spring 2012* edition of *The Bushwalker*. My remarks are personal ones and have not been discussed with other members of my club's committee.

**Personal Accident Insurance.** David asked for our thoughts on the notion of paying higher premiums in return for an increase in the maximum benefit for working members who are injured. Without our club having yet put this idea to a general meeting of our members (to my knowledge, neither BAI nor the Confederation have formally raised the matter with clubs), I think we would be unlikely to support any substantial increase in premiums to fund this. Fewer than 10% of our members are in the paid workforce and I suppose some of that 10% already have their own separate 'loss of earnings' insurance cover. I recognise that 'loss of earnings' cover is one of the few real benefits our personal accident insurance policy provides for members, unless they become disabled, but it really does only potentially benefit a small minority of the total membership. [How about the increased risk of being shot at? - Ed]

**Change of Name.** I support the change of name to the more manageable 'Bushwalking NSW'. I do not support the adoption of a more commercial and generic moniker such as 'Adventure NSW'; there isn't even a hint of our main activity in that. [Here I must agree. I am all for bushwalking, but I really dislike the 'adventure' implications - Ed]

**Track Maintenance.** Our club members help NPWS maintain a couple of tracks in our local area and I know that Milton NPA and Canberra Bushwalking Club do likewise. Could I suggest that clubs be encouraged to liaise with their local NPWS office with the aim of building rapport and maintaining tracks. I do not believe that Bushwalking NSW (Confederation) needs to become involved in any way, because this just brings in unnecessary layers of bureaucracy on both sides of the arrangement. When handled locally, it is easy to schedule dates that suit both parties and, when weather causes a delay, to readily change them.

Bushwalking NSW's (Confederation's) Role. I suffered an involuntary shudder when I read the dreaded words 'Adventure Activity Standards' and the acronym 'ORIC' - I had been suppressing these as one does with terrible memories. Bushwalkers don't need or, in my opinion, want all this over-regulation of our activities. Please work to spare us from these impediments to our enjoyment of pure bushwalking. Also, for my part, I don't want some external team, no matter who they might represent and how well-meaning they may be, to descend upon our club to teach us navigation, bushcraft or anything else. We do quite well with the expertise that resides amongst our members. [Me, I think we do much better - Ed]

However, perhaps Bushwalking NSW could develop a booklet that covered navigation, bushcraft, basic first aid responses to the most likely emergencies, guidelines for walkers and leaders and so on (most of which will never become outdated). This would take time and would also need to be circulated to clubs as a draft for comment, but when finally agreed upon could be printed and issued to every member of a club. This would be something that HQ could do for member clubs without it being seen as 'rules' and 'directives'.

Peter Dalton  
Shoalhaven bushwalkers



# Wilderness Vandalism

Ian Brown

**I**N OCTOBER I was enjoying a walk along the Colo River, downstream of Wollemi Creek, until I was dismayed to find many branches and trees sawn through to create an easier path along the bank. Not just one track, but two, in parallel. Right in the scenic heart of the Wollemi Wilderness.

But that's not all. One of the passes back up onto the Culoul Range usually involves a river crossing. But someone has hacked a series of at least 50 handholds and bucket footholds into a beautiful series of riverworn boulders, and then on up the rocky gully. At least two stainless steel ring-bolts have been drilled into the rock, one with a massive handline attached. A few of the holds were older, but much of the work was new, with raw rock and chips of rubble still lying in the steps, below flood level. It will now take the river many thousands of years to erase this desecration of nature. What an epitaph for the vandals.

And all to avoid a short wade/swim (as its very difficult to cross the boulders). But this pass has been used by walkers for at least 50 years, since well before Bob Buck published his sketch map back in 1973. Bob told it true: "only competent and experienced walkers should attempt trips in the area".

I'm sick to death of going into the bush and finding yet more deliberate damage and mess. Was it for this that our honoured forebears fought to stop the Culoul Range being strip-mined for shale? To stop the river being dammed? To preserve Wollemi National Park and then the Wollemi Wilderness, perhaps the most intact wild area in south-east mainland Australia?

Are these perpetrators bushwalkers? I hope not; they certainly wouldn't meet

my understanding of the term, and I would expect them to be drummed out of any club that honours the name. Talking to other offended walkers, we decided the vandals might be there for other purposes: commercial perhaps, but most likely piscatorial. They probably love the place, in their own way, and this is not just mindless vandalism. But whatever, they should be charged with a criminal offence.

As a naturalist and a photographer, its not just the unsightliness that I find so offensive. Its the selfishness, the downright sense of entitlement, as if they own the place. Some people seem to regard wild places as nothing more than a recreational facility for their personal benefit. On the way up the pass I found signs of Koalas and Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies live there too - both nationally threatened species that are barely hanging on in the Blue Mountains where they were once common. They can do without such attitudes.

The Culoul Range Trail is a 13 km intrusion into the wilderness. I enjoy the convenience of being able to drive into this part of the Colo country as much as the next walker, but if it brings this sort of sacrilege then I for one would vote to shut it down.

So if you know who these people are, or come across them in their destructive handiwork, please ask them to stop. Tell them it is unacceptable, that you are not grateful, and many people are annoyed. Tell them that the Wollemi Wilderness is not just a facility. And if they want their rope back, they know who to call. ♦

*[The most likely explanation I have heard is that this was done by a commercial fishing guide, so that his heroic clients wouldn't get their pinkies wet. - Ed]*



## WILLIS'S WALKABOUTS

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ONLY DREAM  
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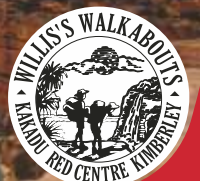
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Over the edge at the start

**B**OB, Marg, Nancy, Andrew and myself left camp at 7.30 am on Saturday (in December) intending to do Kalang today and Dion Dell tomorrow.

We were at the start of the creek by 8.30 am and scrambled down looking for the 1st anchor point. It had been 12 years since some of us had done this canyon and we knew that when it says a scramble that sometimes means a short abseil for us. We are much older than the average canyoner and probably more cautious because of that.

So 2 short abseils gets us to the first big drop, about 50 metres. We found some anchor points easily enough but spent precious time when the rope entangled in the canopy below. It means the first person down spends time fixing the ropes and as this is a canyon of 10 major abseils (more for us), time is important and parties must move quickly.

One was a scramble to the left onto a small ridge. One man's scramble is another man's abseil. The steep incline was very loose and slippery with lots of rocks easily knocked down. We had trouble locating the anchor, wasting more time. It was becoming a treasure hunt. We scouted up, down and around, before finally finding the big tree hanging out on a jutting edge which was difficult to get to safely in the loose soil without hooking up a rope. After reaching the bottom of this drop we then had to climb down along a ledge and make a short abseil down to a platform where we visited a plaque put in place by some WWs for Phil, also from WW, who lost his life at this site in 1997.

One of the daylight abseils



# Shelved in Kalang Canyon

## (or The Kalang Treasure Hunt)

Julie Cox

The next drop was fine but the one after that gave us trouble with the ropes as where we dropped them straight down wasn't eventually the way we wanted to go to avoid a cold swim. So again some time was used altering the path of the ropes. Again, this falls on the first person down as these problems usually can't be seen from the top. It is very tiring and the ones waiting at the top aren't having a picnic either. I wasn't wearing a watch so was not conscious of the time but I know I ate my lunch at 2.30 pm by checking the time with someone. By now we were all out of food except for a bar or lolly. No shortage of water though.

By the time we got to the 2nd last abseil it was 6.30 pm. Again, one rope went straight down, b e a u t i f u l, and this time Andrew volunteered to go first. Half way down he found the other rope had hit a ledge and bounced into the waterfall and into a crevice. He had to tie off about 4 times, shimmy across and drag the recalcitrant rope over dead shrubs, breaking these as he went but still not able to see if the ropes were reaching the bottom due to a slight overhang. It turned out they did but there was none to spare. As is commonly the case, over the noise of the waterfall his words were of no help for us to understand what the problem was. That's why it's no picnic for those waiting above. Finally the ropes were free, so I followed Andrew and then Nancy came next. As by now it was getting dark they went in search of the last anchor point whilst I belayed Bob & Marg down. Returning with their head torches on and no luck it was now 8.50 pm and we were all agreed we were staying put.

As dozens of fireflies danced all around our rugged accommodation and the wafting aroma of a dead wallaby over by the pool puckered our nostrils we searched our packs and 1st aid kits to see what we had. Matches! Great. Plenty of dried wood for a fire and at least it wasn't raining or windy. I had a thermal blanket, as did Margaret and we all had a raincoat. Andrew found an abandoned pack hidden in a niche behind some wood. What story could this tell? Obviously an accident of sorts as there was a used bandage and 2 used thermal blankets, which Bob and Nancy borrowed and put back the next morning.

**W**e each made a rough bed amongst the rocks as close to the fire as comfort allowed. Nancy and Marg used the 2 remaining dry ropes as a mattress, I had an emergency poncho under me and we slept with helmets on for extra warmth. Andrew acted as fire stoker all night as we dozed on and off, watching the stars rotate as the night inched by. The early hours of the morning were the coldest but the fire made some of the trees look like

Christmas trees and by 5.30 am the welcoming sounds of birds reached into our little grotto as the sun struggled to send its light down to us. Breakfast was a handful of mini marshmallows and a Gastrolyte tablet in water but we were all happy and optimistic that today would be an easy and wonderful exit on this fine Sunday morning.

Our first chore was to pull down the two 60 metre ropes which had hung there all night as an eerie reminder of yesterday's 'character building' events. Finding the elusive last anchor involved a hairy walk along an extremely narrow cliff edge. Just as well we hadn't attempted this in the dark. The last abseil was a straightforward 45 metre drop into a small pool, but again, better in daylight. After retrieving the ropes for the last time and taking off our harnesses we walked down the creek to the start of Murdering Gully, our exit point, for a quick 400 metre climb out. Ha! The gully was okay until it got steeper and we were forced to leave it. Climbing up the steep slopes the soil was again loose and crumbly with rocks easily dislodged to fall toward those behind and banging their way loudly down the cliff into the gully far below. There were no handholds and our feet slipped dangerously threatening to send us the same way as the rocks.

**A**bout 1.30 pm (3 meals now missed) we heard an enormous roar coming up the valley and suddenly enormous walnut sized hailstones pelted down on us, bouncing off our helmets and stinging our bodies. I saw Nancy huddled behind a tree, Bob under an overhanging tree and Andrew in some bushes. Ouch, Ouch, Ouch. Then came the rain. We climbed higher and higher heading for the saddle between the Kanangra Walls. Funny looking leeches with spots on their rear like fake eyes appeared, another minor bother, then the mist came in. Thick, thick mist. We heard a helicopter pass twice low down in the valley and I asked Nancy had she accidentally set off the PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) Finally, wet, bedraggled but elated we reached the van for the 9 km drive back to camp for food and a warm night in our sleeping bags.

What an adventure. So proud of us all for our good spirits at all times. The support and teamwork was top class. I couldn't have been stranded on a cliff with a finer bunch of people. ♦

The bivouac, with one abseil left





## Wollemi Full North to South Traverse

# Wilpen Creek to Widden Balcony

Yuri Bolotin

Day 4 — 6 September, 2012



Widden Valley with Mount Pomany on the left

*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 one day. Two others will follow.*

**A**S WAS customary, we were ready to move by 0700. Nothing like a good, steep hill, done at a brisk pace first thing in the morning, to get your juices going! Our climb however was made more enjoyable and therefore easier by the abundant blue irises in bloom covering the slopes, as well as the flowering pink bushes.

We also passed by a curious rock formation resembling a giant turtle with its mouth open, about to swallow us. We darted away, keeping a safe distance.

In fifteen minutes we were on the top of the ridge. Ian observed that it took us significantly less time today to get up the same height than it did for us to come down on another side yesterday afternoon. I think a good night's sleep, even with funnel web spiders and thunderstorms, does wonders to your body.

The leaf littered ground was slightly moist from last night's rain, but the bushes were completely dry due to the continuing high winds. The ridge was quite open and pleasant, although had no

views to offer - yet. Within half an hour, the views appeared - and what views!

We were now travelling almost parallel to the Widden Valley escarpment, and only a relatively short distance from it - 500 m or less. Fantastic vistas were with us all day today. Deep early morning shadows made it all look even more dramatic.

Soon after, we came upon another incredible rock formation that looked like a prehistoric mastodon; the arch of the trunk that came all the way to the ground was high enough for a person to easily walk under.

Soon after the ridge started to drop steeply and brought us to one of the highlights of the entire walk - the Wave Cave. Approaching from the top we first saw a small, wonderfully proportioned cave suspended off an edge of a cliff like a balcony. Its arched ceiling supported by a single, slender, gracious column, shaped as though it was meticulously carved by some masterful artisans, reminded me of one of the Moorish palaces of Southern Spain. The cave was bathed in the

beautiful morning light. We spent a few minutes admiring the cave, completely unaware that this is only the antechamber to the big space underneath. As we moved further down and around a large chamber came into view, with a standalone rock formation resembling a surf

wave in the middle of it.

The wave is about 1.5 m high by 4 m long. Further in this chamber there are huge slabs of brightly coloured rock, collapsed and scattered on the white sandy floor in an artistic fashion. The cave ceiling has an amazing cupola decorated with intricate weatherings and splashes of colour that would put Bramanti to shame. Above the ceiling and to the side is a further richly decorated space culminating with a couple of small windows into the sky. What a place! Many photos were taken, and then it was time to move on. We reached Wilpen Saddle at 0850. The day was still very young, and we have seen so much already!

After another sharp climb, we got to the top of the knoll which was open and grassy. This followed by a 200 m descent that looked a bit tricky at first due to the cliff line in the upper part. Soon, we managed to find a convenient long gully that delivered us from the top most of the way into the next saddle. This saddle was very deep and small, only about 50 m long but 50 m wide.

**A**t 0948 it was morning tea time near some very interesting looking high rocks. Rather than having a rest, we were hungry for more. Taking our snacks with us, we walked towards the rocks, to see if we could climb them. Ian went ahead and disappeared from the view. When Rodney and I approached the bottom of the cliff line, we decided to climb from the right hand side. This led us to another incredible feature - a large, star shaped window. It was pierced through the isolated pagoda tower we were standing on, high above the ground. The golden sunlight pouring through it was just right for the best effect.

Wave Cave — upper antichamber







Star shaped window

By climbing around the window, we realised that we were on one of the three huge monolith rocks, with no way between them other than climbing down one and up the other. We saw Ian standing on top of the next rock, so close but out of reach. He went on the left hand side and followed the base to the most outlying one of these monoliths, quite a bit further apart from the other two. This outcrop that I called Three Brothers is in my opinion as good as if not better than the Three Sisters.

Having finished our morning tea, we were soon climbing again, about 200 m to the top of Torbanite Mountain. It is not a hard climb, but the exposure to the sun and to the strong wind made it a lot harder. From our ascent, we could see the Three Brothers below us that we inspected at morning tea.

Near the summit of Torbanite Mountain we veered to the right (west), to avoid climbing it, as we knew there would not be any views there anyway. The top is flat, open, and strewn with large boulders. It is covered with extensive grasslands which make for a very pleasant walking.

**T**he descent is steep but straightforward. Moving through the saddle, we came almost head on with a female lyrebird – this must have been near its nest, as it faced us fearlessly and was not running away. Many photos were taken but very few of them good, as the bird was moving around too quickly.

Our ridge did a 90 degree turn to the west at this point. The day had started with not much wind, but it had picked up to perhaps 60 - 70 kph. Even though the wind was providing very welcome cooling

and ventilation, these high gusts were a bit scary during scrambles and whilst walking on narrow cliff edges. One such descent was particularly difficult, with not much to hang on to except a few tiny rock ledges, whilst the wind was trying to pull us off them.

We were now following a thin, rocky ridge with terrific views on both sides. The wind was so strong that it blew my hat away, luckily not too far away. We decided to take our hats off for a while after that. Maybe the wind would appreciate our respect and ease off?

For a little while now, we were looking for a protected spot for lunch on the east facing side, and at 1220 managed to locate just the right one - a magnificently decorated small cave away from any

wind. We reflected on the multitude of these richly decorated caves in the Wollemi. I wanted a descriptive name for them – like pagodas that describe tall, rocky towers with curved ironstone formations. Maybe 'baroque caves' – equal in opulence to many of the man made creations of that period. Thus, we had lunch in a baroque cave.

At 1252 it was time to go. The temperature was 19 C, tempered by a very strong westerly wind. From our refuge on the eastern side of the cliff we had to move to the exposed western side, and the difference was instantaneously felt! Our route was by a scenic, high, narrow ledge, with the cliffs both above and below us.

**T**he next saddle was easy and open. Unfortunately, Prickly Pear had reappeared here for the first time in more than a day. No fruit, so this time we couldn't even console ourselves with eating our enemy up as an after lunch desert.

The vegetation changed dramatically as we stepped onto the basalt. We could feel loose stones under our feet. 'Ankle twisting territory', quipped Ian. The tall, thick grass, growing in clumps, was covered with bright, yellow flowers. There were lots of small Xanthorrhoeas

Lyrebird protecting its nest near Torbanite Mountain





there as well – and I thought they like sandstone ridges only?!

**A**long the way, Rodney picked up some Cranesbill, a small plant with green star shaped leaves. You crush it and apply to bruises and cuts. I had a deep one on my head from one of the tree branches that someone had positioned in the wrong place and was happy to give the bush medicine a try. And of course, amazing views were still there with us on this basalt spur – Mount Pomany to the south, and to the south east – a whole suite of other mountains.

From the basalt cap, we descended into a very scenic saddle that has a deep, wide, dramatic notch through it which continues all the way down plunging hundreds of meters into the Widden Valley below. In the middle of this saddle is a huge rock with mature trees growing on it. This feature is not shown on the topographical map.

We were now walking right beside the Widden Valley escarpment. The views, that had been incredible for most of the day, had now become totally unreal. Not only we could see the valley below, fringed by the high peaks on all sides, the cliff edge we were walking along provided an amazing foreground, dropping



Getting water from rock near Reubens Gap

hundreds of meters into the abyss underneath. Unfortunately, I think by now I have already used up all my superlatives, so not sure how to describe a vista that is better than ‘amazing’. You just have to go there and see it for yourself!

Next, we came upon an orphan rock column, about 3m high, perched on the very edge of the cliff. For the photo session, I was very tempted to stand on the narrowest of ledges between the column and the enormous drop below, but common sense prevailed in the end, and the photo was taken with me on the opposite side. After all, I wanted to finish this Traverse at Kurrajong, rather than here!

By 1415, we started a steep descent into Reubens Gap. It is a two stage exercise. After the first sharp drop flattens out and you expect to come into a saddle, there is the second even sharper decline. We were so eager to come down that we overdid the second descent and went too low and had to scramble up about 10 m and sidle along, in order to finally get to the gap and the fire trail. The time was 1428.

Dropped our packs and went down the road towards Reubens Creek for water. The road plunges down very steeply and our goal was still a fair distance away, so the idea was to minimise the water search time. Further down the valley there are water wells with assured supply of clean water, and before them there are normally pools in Reubens Creek. But even closer to the Gap there is a large rock on the right hand side of the road that has a deep cavity in it. We were hoping it would contain water as usual. It did, we were in luck! The water was not the first grade, but it was a lot closer. We filled up, two at a time, as the top of the rock could only hold two people comfortably.

**B**ack on top by 1524, and on with it. The first hill is steep but with no scrub. Next comes a bit where prior research really pays off. You are suddenly in front of a tall cliff. Do you climb over the top, sidle to the left or sidle to the right? Our recce earlier this year said to the right (west). The east side may go as well but not as quick; over the top ends up with a 20 m drop. We were getting tired in the late afternoon and were carrying 4-5 L of water each from Reubens Gap.

Rodney setting up in overhang underneath lyrebird nest







Rodney and Ian at Mastodon Rock



Yuri next to rock column on edge of Widden escarpment

We were now stepping into a very special area that extends S from here to our intended camp site, still about 800 m away. The landscape was very dissected and full of tall pagodas, multi-level caves, giant boulders, narrow slots and more. I am passing by for the second time, and on both days it is late in the afternoon and there is no time to stop and investigate, as we are trying to make the camp. One day, there will be a special trip to explore this spectacular part of the Wollemi World. I called it Reubens Labyrinth.

**T**owards the end there is a very sharp climb to the top of the escarpment, designed to test one's strength and stamina, especially late in the day with full packs. We took it easy, which is not a big deal – it only takes 15 minutes or so. Just before the climb, and alongside it, there are more interesting rock formations and caves, especially one that looks like another surf wave.

We reached our camp site just after

1630. This place is absolutely spectacular, and is worth a visit in its own right. It is on the very edge of the escarpment, with the cliffs dropping several hundred meters into the Widden Valley. However the edge here is not flat but forms a rocky barrier about 3 m high that one can climb to from the side opposite to the cliff. You can then sit just underneath that barrier, like in a balcony seat in a theatre, and behold the incredible view of the valley below, the high mountains on the opposite side, the movement of the sun, and at night, the moon. I called it Widden Balcony.

There is a small, high, rocky platform above the Balcony, where Rodney camped last time during a huge thunderstorm. An interesting experience, he admits. We called that Rodney's Aire. It is like a stone tower and the vista from there is jaw dropping. Underneath the Widden Balcony, protected from the westerly wind, is a series of cave overhangs, where we decided to sleep this time. Rodney

erected his fly beneath a lyrebird nest. For Ian and myself, it was sleeping alfresco on the soft sand of the cave.

We had our 'happy hour' at the Balcony, in premium seats, watching the magnificent sunset. Later, after dinner, we took our torches and went up to Rodney's Aire, to see the night sky of our lives – a 360 degree expanse of the sky filled with stars and constellations. We felt we are standing in the centre of the Universe. The Milky Way was stretching like a giant rainbow from one end of the horizon to another. We remained there for a long time, despite the wind which was still quite strong, absorbing the magic of the place. This was a fitting conclusion to a hard but really phenomenal day that would be difficult to beat.

**I** fell asleep by the sound of the wind howling outside, but totally protected and comfortable on a soft, sandy ground of our cave.

Total distance today was 14.5km, ascent – 1,326m. ♦

Widden Balcony — view south to Mount Pomany



A narrow passage through the rocks in Reubens Labyrinth





# Kosciuszko Can Wait

Ian Smith

I WANTED to see Blue Lake and hopefully get some reflection shots, so we opted for the 10 km return to Blue Lake on Xmas Day. I'd like to say the day dawned, but it never did, obscured by a mountain mist.

Initially we passed some of the most beautiful snow gums I'd ever seen, with pastel colours splashed randomly on muted backgrounds in improbable abstract shapes that many an artist would envy. Dewdrops hung from every stalk and branch and the odd blossom sparkled in the diffused light.

Around 10.20 am we met another walker - he'd started at 4.30 am on the Summit Track, a 21 km loop via Kosciuszko. A few hundred metres further on we came upon a murder of crows and it was so eerie as they squawked and flitted from granite boulder to granite boulder, merely black shapes in the soft light of the mist. Their echoing 'ark, ark' cries and silhouetted movements in the fog made us think we were on the set of Hitchcock's 'The Birds', their noise the only sound in the enshrouded mountain. There must have been over 100 of them in this bleak landscape.

Turns out they're mainly up here for the Bogong moths, blown here from Queensland in their millions. In ages past the aborigines, though their tribal groups didn't intermingle in the valleys below, joined together on the high plains in summer to feast upon this food bonanza. These days the moths carry traces of arsenic upon them from the crop spraying hundreds of kilometres away and thus the flora and fauna up here have been poisoned by traces of the chemical and its insidious side effects.

We took the turnoff to Blue Lake. Our route suddenly became a rough tiny rocky path down to the lookout but the enshrouding mist prevented any viewing of the waters until, like a temptress defrocking herself, the pervading cloud let in glimpses of what lay beyond and we were transfixed from that point on. Everywhere we glanced it was like a



magician conjuring up a final illusion before the finale and it was stunning. The wafting clouds, driven over the mountains by the prevailing wind, reached Blue Lake and then, sucked down by the colder temperature, cascaded spectacularly into the vortex before recovering and tumbling onwards, ever upwards, ascending the slopes beside us, over the million coloured dots of wildflowers that flecked the landscape in their pretty hues. ♦

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# Hydration Packs — the Case Against

Brett Davis  
Shoalhaven Bushwalkers

**J**UST like walking poles, hydration packs have become one of the latest „must have“ items for bushwalkers, and just like walking poles, their alleged benefits are far outweighed by their shortcomings. For a start, they are relatively expensive. Hydration pack bladders that slip into an existing backpack cost from \$15 up, while integrated backpack / hydration pack “solutions” can set you back well over \$100. Add the ongoing costs of cleaning kits and chemicals to this initial expense, and you might be left wondering why you just didn’t pack a couple of plastic bottles that you get for free when you buy some soft drink.

And if you go the “cheaper” option of just buying the bladder, you might have to upgrade your day-pack to a purpose-built pack that incorporates a separate pouch for the bladder, unless you just want to pop it into your pack with the rest of your valuables and risk the inevitable leakage problems - because, sooner or later, despite all claims to the contrary, your hydration pack WILL leak. At best you will be left with a wet butt as the water from the hydration pack soaks into the bottom of your backpack and out the other side. Other more serious likelihoods include destroyed cameras, ruined gps devices, short-circuited car-key remotes, and soggy sandwiches when you discover that your expensive pack liner protecting all your vital equipment from inundation has unexpectedly developed a pin-hole and has suddenly become a hydration pack itself.

**O**f course, manufacturers will tell you that their packs are “leak-proof”. Is this because other hydration packs leak? Or is it because earlier versions of their own packs leaked? And why do they stress the “leak-proof” angle? Do soft drink manufacturers advertise “leak-proof” bottles? The answer is “no” - because everybody knows that soft drink bottles don’t leak.

Some manufacturers even go so far as to advertise their products as “100% leak-proof” - doesn’t “leak-proof” imply 100% “leak-proofness”? One prominent reviewer of hydration packs on the Internet rated one of the products under review as “99% leak proof” - which means that it leaks!

And even if somehow, miraculously, the bottle does not leak, there is always the problem of their “bite valves” getting pinched during transport - and leaking!

All in all, hydration packs are rather impractical. They are tucked away in your backpack, out of sight and often out of mind as well. You cannot see how much water you have left, and sometimes the first hint you have that you are getting low on water is when you start sucking air and realise that you have actually already run out.

**F**illing a hydration pack is relatively easy - at home. In the bush, when you might have to fill your pack from a shallow pool or an awkward trickle down a rock, hydration packs are notoriously difficult to fill. Some people carry a small bottle which they use to catch water to fill their hydration pack, which makes one wonder why they were not just carrying bottles in the first place.

Without exception, hydration packs have tubes leading from the bladder to your mouth. Apart from the fact that the water in the tube will heat up rapidly in sunlight, much like a baby in a parked car, these tubes pose few problems, except when they mysteriously unclip and dangle away somewhere behind you, just out of reach of your frantically searching hands, or when they snag on trees and scrub, and rip out of the bladder entirely. If you are lucky, the tube might only be punctured, or perhaps the mouth-piece will just fall out and disappear into the leaf litter at your feet.

Assuming that you survive your walk, when you get home there will be maintenance to be done. While others simply rinse their water bottles and wipe around the lip, hydration pack owners must (or should) go through a much more complicated procedure.

Hydration cleaning kits include the “basic” tools you will need for a thorough rinse/scrub/drying session. Many kits come with an expander piece to prise apart the walls of the hydration pack to promote proper drying, plus a drying hook on which to hang the pack after the cleaning process. Most kits also contain a tube-cleaning brush, usually over a metre



long, and a thick, bristly brush for scrubbing the reservoir’s inner walls.

Camelbak - a leading manufacturer of hydration packs - recommend cleaning your hydration pack thoroughly if leaving it unused for periods of a week or more. For those of you who walk once a week at most, this means you should clean your hydration pack every week!

Manufacturers also recommend their own cleaning tablets (of course) for deep cleaning the water bladder once a month.

Camelbak cleaning tablets are similar to denture cleansing tablets in their action. They contain chlorine dioxide, which is basically bleach. You pop the tablet in a litre of water in the hydration bladder for just five minutes, then rinse thoroughly and hang up to dry. Manufacturers suggest that you might want to follow this with a rinse of baking soda, lemon, or vinegar to help remove the chlorine taste of the cleansing tablets. They don’t actually tell us what to use to get rid of the taste of the baking soda, lemon or vinegar.

**A**s opposed to those who prefer water bottles, people who use hydration packs do seem to drink more water more often, because they spend an inordinate amount of time urinating. While others stop to quietly sip from their bottles, hydration pack users can be seen dashing into the bush in search of suitable trees.

Hydration packs might be great for elite mountain-bikers, orienteers, rogainers or paddlers, where time spent stopping to take a drink from a bottle is time wasted, but for most bushwalkers the occasional stop to drop packs, have a stretch and top up our fluid levels is a time to look forward to - a welcome break from our hiking effort. During these short stops, when the hydration pack people are scurrying into the scrub, we have time to contemplate their folly, realising that while their packs might be equipped with all the latest hydration technology, in reality they are just the suckers on the end. ♦

[I couldn't agree more! - Ed]



## Book Review



## Best Walks of the Southern Highlands

John & Gillian Souter  
ISBN 9781921874895  
Paperback, 234 pp, RRP \$29.99

**T**HE SOUTERS have published a number of walking books generally covering the Illawong and Shoalhaven regions, and this is the latest one. They have got a very clear and easy to understand style, with each walk having a summary, a map, a more detailed description of the walk, a grading (easy, medium and hard), access information and some photos. Mixed in with all this are little extras about people, places and variants.

The book is all about day walks, ranging from 1 hour to six hours long. They have been sorted into areas: Wollondilly, Mittagong/Nattai, 'The Heart of the Highlands', Robertson & Escarpment, Bundanoon Gullies, and Bungonia/Wombeyan. However, a few of the extensions mentioned would make for two-day walks with a camp somewhere nice.

Some of the walks could be described as strolls around small villages, but others could be described as energetic climbs down and up the big gorges in the area. Ascents of up to 450 m are possible.

The book is a paperback, but the pages are quite thick paper and should last fairly well, even in a pack. That means the book is not quite 'light-weight', but for day walks that hardly matters. If you can't find it in a bookshop, contact the publisher via [natashawy@woodslane.com.au](mailto:natashawy@woodslane.com.au) or: 02 8445 2301

*Roger Caffin*

## Farewell Ted Maack

**I**T WAS a sad loss to the NSW bushwalking and conservation movements when long-time volunteer Michael "Ted" Maack died from a terminal illness on 14 July 2012. He was only 55.

An electrical engineer, Ted first appeared on the bushwalking scene when he joined the Sydney University Bushwalkers in 1983. He was assigned the nickname "Ted" to distinguish him from several other Michaels—and because at the time there was a prominent Sydney politician by the name Ted Mack. However, the name always seem very apt, and firmly stuck. Ted really was a ted: somewhat cuddly, a bit gruff on the outside, but warm and generous on the inside.

Ted soon became known in the club as a competent and adventurous bushwalker, cross-country skier and navigator. Whether leading or following, he was friendly and supportive towards newcomers, and was usually to be found at the rear of the party. He is also recalled as a great participant at club campfires, known for working his way through the entire bushwalkers' songbook in the course of a night.

It was through the club that Ted met Maeve Kennedy. The pair moved to the Blue Mountains and planned to marry, but fate intervened when Maeve tragically died after a car accident. Ted then became de-facto father to Maeve's two young sons.

Ted joined Springwood Bushwalking Club in 1990, and was active through the nineties, while still maintaining his involvement with Sydney Uni. He was a member of Springwood's winning NavShield rogaie team in 1991, and subsequent place-getting teams. I fondly recall one occasion when he decided to ginger up the team by passing round a flask of rum (or was it Drambuie?) when we were only five minutes from the start! I admit that horrified me at the time: I was focused on the end result. But after years of reflection I realised, as Ted did then, that team bonding and having fun were worth far more than first place.

But Ted was no ordinary bushwalker. He served with distinction in the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs for 24 years, being a delegate firstly of Sydney Uni Bushwalkers, then Springwood and finally the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

His Confederation career started with the role of Junior Vice President in 1988. About that time he also took on the job of Transport Officer with the Search and Rescue Service.

As such, he had the privilege of towing the official trailer to search and rescue events with his old short-wheel-base Landcruiser.

1991 saw him as Confederation President, taking over from the long-serving Gordon Lee. Then, after periods as Minutes Secretary and Tracks and Access Officer, in 2001 he was appointed Conservation Officer, arguably the most important role in the Confederation. He worked hard at it for 10 years—that is until ill-health forced his retirement in 2011.

Ted was also active in conservation in the Blue Mountains. In 1992, the 60th anniversary of the saving of Blue Gum Forest saw Ted as MC at the ceremonies in the forest—an occasion recalled by those present at the recent 80th anniversary. He then became an inaugural member of the Friends of Blue Gum Forest.

He was also a long-time member the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, where his engineering and mapping skills proved very useful. He was an active member of the Blue Mountains Mayor's World Heritage Advisory Committee, and the campaign against the Stealth filming saw him at the blockade on the Mount Hay road.

Meanwhile, he spent 15 years as a Cub and Scout Leader at Springwood, earning a reputation as a quiet but effective leader, much liked by the boys. Many young men of today are richer for Ted's voluntary service.

In 2000 Ted married Shila, the new love of his life. Shila was not really a bushwalker but was very supportive of Ted's passion for the bush and conservation, and her family readily adopted their new father.

On Ted's passing, Confederation President Dodie Green said "Ted was our friend and ally in the protection and preservation of our great wilderness areas and national parks. Individuals with his sense of service, passion and commitment are few and far between, he will be very sadly missed."

*Andy Macqueen*



Michael "Ted" Maack officiating at the 60th Anniversary of the saving of Blue Gum Forest



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