

The Bushwalker



Great South West Walk
Victoria

Volume 38
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Winter 2013

Wouldn't you like to be here?



From the Western Arthurs to Federation Peak, South West Tasmania.
Photo: Nina Gallo



The sad state of the Calna Creek Bridge,
Great North Walk, June 2013.
Photo: Roger Caffin

From the editor's desk. . .

Our apologies to the NPA. They had asked us to feature some articles in the last issue to go with the back page advertisement, but their copy reached us two days too late. We have included some of it here instead. In addition, some of it was put on our website.

This issue includes part 3 of Yuri Bolotin's article on their North-South Traverse of Wollemi NP. I know other people have done all sorts of N-S and W-E traverses over the years - for that matter my wife and I have done several of each. But many of these other traverses have been done in stages: ours were done that way. Yuri and friends went right through the middle of the Park in one go. That would be one of the hardest walks on the East Coast of Australia in my opinion: 18 days of Wollemi scrub. The front cover shows a walk radically different from Wollemi: it was taken on the beach of the Great South West Walk (GSWW) on the south coast of Victoria. In the ordinary way you do an anti-clockwise loop from Portland along the Glenelg River to Nelson, then you come back along the beach to Portland. There are some rather cute campsites in the dunes with water supplies and lots of flotsam and jetsam. It was very different from Wollemi NP!

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. In particular, little 640 x 480 photos and, little photos from cheap phones are just not good enough: they simply do not print well enough at 300 dpi. We need the full-size originals, straight from the camera and uncropped and unretouched, so we can set them up for the printing process.

Apart from that, please keep those bushwalking articles rolling in. We need them. If you are describing a walk somewhere, it would really help if you could give the reader (who may be from far away) some idea of where the walk is. We don't need GRs, just a general idea. We need suitable photos for most every article, so please include a few. Once again, note that little, cropped or shrunk photos will rarely be accepted. If you want to include a DOC file or a PDF (in addition to the mandatory plain text file and full-sized photos) to illustrate how the photos fit into the text, please do so as well. That can only help.

However, photos embedded in DOC or PDF files are not accepted by themselves, and neither are scans of standard photographic prints - with the possible exception of historical items where the print is all that exists. Finished DOC and PDF articles are not suitable by themselves either: we often have to rearrange the text to fit on the page with ads or other changes. Plain text plus original photos!

Finally, the opinions expressed by authors may not represent the official opinions of the Confederation or of any Club. The Editor's opinions are his own, are subject to change without explanation, and may be pretty biased anyhow.

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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** for a list of Clubs, but a far more useful on-line list is available at the Confederation website **www.bushwalking.org.au**, broken up into areas. There's lots of other good stuff there too, including the Australian Bushwalking FAQ.



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Front Cover: Great South West Walk, Victoria.
Photo: Roger Caffin.



West Keiwa Red Robin, Battery 9. Story on page 11

Wollemi Full North to South Traverse - Part 3

From Tootie Creek to Kurrajong Heights

Yuri Bolotin

Day 18 — September, 2012

(Parts 1 & 2 were in our Summer and Autumn 2013 Issues)



Wollemi National Park sign on road

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 have published condensed versions of three different days on the walk from Yuri's track diaries. This is the third instalment, the conclusion of the series.

'This is our last day!'

My first thought of the morning immediately seized all my attention as soon as I was woken up at 0535 by loud and melodious bird calls around our camp. Even though this was true and we had been striving for this to happen during the last 18 days, I found it hard to believe that this incredible journey is about to end. The trip went too quickly and it went too slowly, at the same time.

Somehow, I felt very edgy during the night, woke up several times and spent ages lying in my soft and comfortable bed, listening to the distant murmur of Tootie Creek below us. I was not having any profound or anxious thoughts, just trying to fall asleep, but couldn't. This was the most restless night of the Traverse for me, and I had no idea why. Only now I am thinking perhaps subconsciously I was too excited about it being the last day of our grand adventure.

Soon we were having breakfast, packing the fly, striking the camp – an ordinary start for an extraordinary day, one of the most memorable days of my life. For the last 7 days, it was Ian and I only on this third leg of our voyage as Rodney had to leave us at Capertee. At 0650, with our packs light and our spirits high, we were off on our way to Kurrajong, to finish the Wollemi Traverse. We first headed south west on gently rising ground towards the cliffs and away from Tootie Creek, with the idea of climbing onto the ridge and then dropping back from it after about a

kilometre. This would avoid a long and potentially awkward, scrubby and wet push along a substantial gorge formed by this major tributary of the creek.

From here, we started a long and gentle sidle to the south, through a very pretty landscape. To the right of us were low, broken bluffs covered in green moss and red lichen; to our left the valley dropped steeply into the rainforest-clad gorge below. Around us were fields of spring flowers, tall grass and Xanthorrhoeas. The scrub under our feet was manageable, the morning was crisp, the sun was shining gently, our packs were light, and we knew we were getting closer to our destination with our every step.

Then, suddenly and in a total dissonance to the idyllic scenery we were experiencing we came upon an old, totally rusted car wreck, deposited in a very artistic way along a line of four tall, mature Angophoras. Upon examining it we thought it was a Jeep. The car was a fair way down the slope from the top of the ridge. The first edition map shows a road up on the ridge, but they must have done pretty well

getting the car here, unless it was set in motion and left to its own devices to crash at this spot.

We dropped about 50 m in elevation and continued to contour in the same southerly direction underneath the cliffs. Next we came to the first of three stunning baroque caves, all within a distance of about 200 m. To be honest this took me by complete surprise, as I had not seen any near our place before. These caves could rival the best I've seen in the Wollemi. What they lack in size (they are quite small, about 10 m long by 2 m high), they more than make up for in their astonishing ornamentation. I called them Psychedelic Caves.

The walls of the first cave are a psychedelic riot of patterns and colour – yellow, orange, red, white, with dots,

Archeological Jeep



stripes, lines, circles, zigzags, swirls – they are all there at the same time.

The second cave has much more settled, restrained colour palette, in soft grey, white and yellow. On its ceiling is the centrepiece - a stunning, recessed ceiling rose or circular niche, decorated with broad, wavy stripes of colour. The walls are a psychedelic jumble of soft three-dimensional shapes, resembling ice cream cones, sea shells, swirls of milk and honey.

The third cave, whilst being smaller and visually less striking than the other two, has one incredible feature – a delicate, three-dimensional, paper thin figure of a brown, long necked fantasy bird, coming out of the cave wall at a straight angle.

We crossed this well-flowing tributary of Tootie Creek and moved up the nose opposite us. The much drier and vine-free ridge went up very steeply at first, quickly gaining 60 m of altitude, then flattened a

Australia, by a roadside sign in Kurrajong, on Bells Line of Road, where thousands of motorists travel every day. Before planning our Traverse, I had been through that spot hundreds of times and didn't know it was part of the Wollemi.

After the photo session, we continued walking south, parallel to another private property on the southern side of the road. On our way we needed to cross a fairly deep, double headed gully. As one might expect it contained some Black

Wattle and a bit of Lawyer Vine, but to our surprise it also had a number of small waterfalls, cascades, grottoes and even a delightful cave with the water running over it. All this within a few hundred metres from Mountain Lagoon Road, unbeknown to most people who use it, including, until now, myself. Having had a look at the map, this gully is in fact a major tributary of Flat Rock Creek.

Having used North Wheeny Gap Trail for a little while, we started our descent into Wheeny Creek – the last major creek to cross on our Traverse. I must admit, both Ian and I were a bit apprehensive about this last challenge. We were planning to check it out prior to the Traverse but ran out of time, so it was an almost complete unknown. I don't know exactly what went on in Ian's mind, but I couldn't help thinking that if it happens to be a canyon (which is far from unlikely in this area and very possible judging by the map), how silly would it be to have gone through the whole Wollemi, only to be seriously delayed by the last creek. Yesterday evening I had sent an SMS with our ETA at Kurrajong to the support team.

We were keen to make that time and to keep any delays to the minimum, even though we had allowed a good safety margin.

The descent began fairly gently at first, through a series of wide, flat ledges covered with thick scrub separated by short rocky bits. We soon came to the first significant cliff line but had no trouble finding



It's a bird!

a way down. Shortly after the second cliff line was also negotiated, then the third, and the fourth, all smaller cliff lines.

The fifth cliff line proved to be the biggest. We followed the line of the spur, keeping to the left (west) of the nose, until we came to a slot that looked like it could go. It did, and it dropped us about 20 m very quickly, underneath the cliffs. The descent then continued through thick scrub, until we came out on the nose above the sixth cliff line that fortunately looked like going either to the left or to the right. We went on the left and soon got to another drop – the seventh cliff line, which we also negotiated on the left hand side.

Under this last cliff line, we saw a strange dog shaped pinnacle, about 4 m tall, standing in front of the wall of rock and gazing towards the creek below.

The Lawyer Vine is never too far away in this area – indeed, it soon came in, and it was the thickest, juiciest vine we had come across on this Traverse. Some kind of record! Luckily for our skins, the size of thorns doesn't seem to be related to the size of leaves and branches.

At 1109 we were down at Wheeny Creek. Once again, we had made it! The total descent was of the order of 300 m, but not really very hard as the cliff line in our chosen area is broken up into about seven different ones, all spaced well apart.

Wheeny Creek at our descent point is very attractive, going through a number of flat rock platforms, then leaping over

Psychedelic cave



Icecream cave

bit and climbed steadily from there on to add another 80 m or so to our elevation. Soon we picked up an old fire trail (once again, only shown in the first edition map). It took us through a pleasant, open forest of Angophoras, Banksias and Scribbly Gums set amongst the wildflowers.

At 0852 we left the fire trail, as it would have taken us outside of the national park to a private property, and fixed a bearing to the south east, going down and up a small gully in order to stay within the park. Fifteen minutes later we crossed Mountain Lagoon Road - our first sealed road in 18 days. We were within a few minutes drive from our place; in fact, I often pass this spot when I go out for my morning run. I must say I had slight shivers down my spine – we were getting so close!

There was a 'Wollemi National Park' sign beside the road, right where we crossed it. As I knew, there was not going to be a sign at the finishing spot in Kurrajong, we decided to take a few photos at this spot. It beats me why the NPWS would not identify the southernmost point of one of the most important national parks in NSW, if not in



The Dog-shaped Pinnacle

big moss covered boulders in a series of small waterfalls, before spilling over a large tranquil pool. We spent a little time here, relaxing and enjoying it all. The other side of the creek didn't seem to present any climbing problems, so with the last significant challenge behind us we felt we were now indeed on a home run.

At 1125 we started our ascent out of Wheeny Creek. Predictably, the dry south facing slope was much easier to go through, even though it was quite steep. Soon, we reached a rocky ledge overlooking the creek, as well as both our descent and ascent routes. A couple of big trees growing right on the edge provided some shade from the sun that by now had become very strong. We were now well ahead of schedule because we ended up not needing to use our contingency plan for crossing Wheeny Creek gorge. The thought of getting to the end before our support team and waiting around alongside Bells Line of Road didn't feel very appealing: a nice problem to have. So, we decided to spend a leisurely lunch time at this spot above Wheeny Creek and after that do an excursion to the cliffs on the western side of the ridge that looked interesting on the map. The temperature at this point was a balmy 21 C.

After our last lunch of the Traverse (in fact, our last meal of the Traverse), we went for a little wander around our locality. From our rock platform we followed a gentle slope uphill. The entire area south of us must have been in a bushfire (or a controlled burn) very recently, perhaps last year. Most of the

old trees had survived, but there was very little undergrowth. We sidled around to the south west and looked at the impressive views towards the junction of Wheeny Creek and an unnamed tributary. In fact, checking the map, we realised that this was the tributary that goes all the way to Bells Line of Road and that we would be required to cross almost immediately before we come out at the southernmost point of the Park. We didn't know it then, but that crossing was going to prove pretty horrible, so I later named this creek Logjam Creek. Looking into the valley of Wheeny Creek itself it was interesting to see a clear, almost horizontal dividing line of colour going along the creek where the dry Sclerophyll forest changes into rainforest.

Around us we could see how fresh, green shoots were popping up everywhere, contrasting with the black bark of the established trees charred by the fire. There was much to do and enjoy around us, but somehow both Ian and I felt very flat and tired at that time, as though we were at a limit of our energy. Neither of us could really explain it, but this was the case. Even though the terrain we were walking through was very easy and we had no backpacks, every step seemed to be an effort. You do get ups and downs during a long walk like this, but I was definitely experiencing the time of my lowest energy of the last 18 days. The strong, shared craving to explore and experience new things that was driving us all this time had suddenly evaporated, so we slowly walked back to our rock and

Willis's Walkabouts

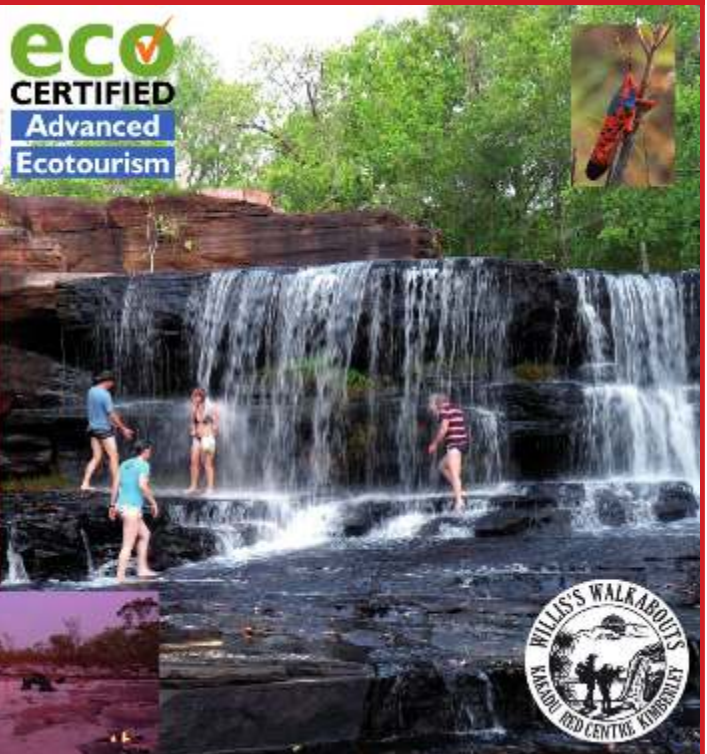
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the shade of the trees and just sat there for some while, even trying to have a little nap.

It required an extra effort to shoulder our almost empty packs at 1400 and to start going southwards and up a gentle slope on the last round of our Odyssey. Almost immediately, I felt a surge of energy and a powerful desire to just go ahead and finish it. I am sure Ian felt the same way. The walking was initially easy because the ridge had been recently burnt. This was an unexpected bonus for two reasons. First, we had no undergrowth to slow us down, and second, it provided us with another aspect of the Wollemi and the type of scenery we had not yet experienced during this journey. Far from being depressing as one might think, I find this landscape of old and new, death and re-birth, very life affirming.

At 1420, we crossed to our very last (and our shortest time to be spent on!) topographical map – Kurrajong. Straight after, we passed an interesting mushroom shaped rock formation that reminded me of a miniature Totem Pole. To our south, in the distance, we had the first glimpse through the trees of the Cut above the Bells Line of Road that would be very near our final destination. We could even discern the line of metal barriers above the road. We pushed on.

We were now going through some areas that were not affected by the fire, or where perhaps it wasn't as vigorous. Then, there was a steep climb, around 80 m, that put us back above the 500 m line. This was the last significant ascent of our trip. Through the trees, we had good views towards Mt Tootie, Mt Irvine and beyond, although the air was a bit hazy.

A few minutes later, we came to a cattle track – the cows from the nearby property must have been wandering into the Park in search of greener pastures. Next, we passed by an old fence and what appeared to be a human track going off into the gully on our right (west).

We now had about one kilometre to go and expected to finish in the next half an hour. But nothing is guaranteed when you

walk in the Wollemi! Soon, we needed to cross a gully, climb out of it and continue on the tops for a while, before sidling and coming down another steep and overgrown ravine not affected by the fire. Our progress slowed significantly and from being much ahead of the time of our appointment with the support team a few hours ago, we were now running increasingly late.

But the slow going of the last hour was nothing compared to the next bit which was the crossing of that major tributary of Wheeny Creek we had seen from our lookout a few hours earlier. It must be the southernmost creek in the Wollemi. There were no cliffs, but the scrub and the Lawyer Vine were incredible, both on the descent and the ascent. I named this unnamed tributary of Wheeny Creek, Logjam Creek.

We were doing it really tough indeed. It was a very fitting finish to our journey. Wollemi does not yield easily, and it indeed kept putting obstacles in front of us until the last minute!

Our speed was perhaps 10 metres per minute. We had preset our point of exit as a GPS waypoint at lunchtime, and it now showed that we were less than 100 m from it. We were still deep down in Logjam Creek, with absolutely no views and no sense of how close we must have been, clambering over a huge pile of debris and pushing through the forest of Lawyer Vine. The tiredness that accumulated over the last 3 weeks had crept in with a vengeance. The time



Finished!

ground to a halt, minutes seemed like hours. Will there be an end to this? Then, suddenly, the bush opened up, and we were on the Bells Line of Road, at the southernmost point of the Wollemi National Park. The time was 1558, GR 78760 88595.

We turned west and walked downhill for a short while, when we saw, on the opposite, left side of the road, several cars and people near them, who started to run towards us. They were all coming in our direction, yelling and gesticulating joyfully. I had visualised this moment, of us coming out from the bush, onto the road in Kurrajong Heights, many times a day, every day, intensely, for the past 18 days, and even before that when thinking about the walk. The reality of it was now unrolling in front of me, just like I had seen it in my mind, only it seemed to be in slow motion...we made it!!!! ♦

Total trip distance: 278.5 km.
Total trip ascent: 12,727 m.



Wheeny Creek



The last 'little' creek

Control of feral animals back in the hands of NPWS

National Parks Association (NPA)

On 4 July 2013, the NSW Government announced that a trial of the Supplementary Pest Control Program would commence in 12 national parks. After this trial, a report would be delivered to cabinet and further national parks on the original list of 75 may be considered for the program.

The details of controls and management reveal that campaign to stop amateur, recreational hunting in national parks has been won.

The trial program is fundamentally a professional hunting program and will be run entirely by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff. The program is back in the hands of the professionals who have always managed pest animals in NSW. NPWS staff may bring in professional volunteers to help execute its professionally planned and managed programs, and such volunteers will have to go through the same training as NPWS staff. E.G: Undertake navigation training, species identification training, demonstrate competency etc.

Any pest eradication programs that NPWS staff utilise professional volunteers for will have one of two zones within it. There were previously three, and the third to be omitted was the 'scary zone' that permitted amateurs to carry out unsupervised hunting at their own discretion. The two zones that remain are Zone A and Zone B.

Zone A:

Volunteers will be part of the NPWS team and working shoulder to shoulder with experienced NPWS staff.

Zone B:

Experienced and trained volunteers are supervised by NPWS staff. This will include induction and daily safety briefings. Detailed reporting, data collection and debriefing requirements will also apply. Site specific shooting plans with detailed maps will direct operations, with these being approved by NPWS regional managers consistent with regional pest strategies.

The National Park will be closed to the public when pest eradication programs are taking place as has always occurred when NPWS have managed these programs. A new addition to the rules around pest animal control is that there will be no shooting activity by NPWS at all in any national park during school holidays. No minors will be allowed to hunt in any national parks despite lobbying from the Shooters and Fishers Party.

Unions of National Parks and Wildlife Service feel that the safety concerns they raised during the inception of the program have been adequately addressed.

The campaign to stop amateur, recreational hunting in national parks has very much been won! The groups working on the campaign have committed to keeping a watch on the program and are now calling for:

- Funds dedicated to the Game Council to be given to NPWS for strategic, integrated professional pest animal control programs, including further research into more humane methods of killing pest animals.



- The management and controls for pest animal programs in National Parks to be also applied to our State Forests.

In addition to the announcement around the Supplementary Pest Control Program, on 4 July the government also announced it had disbanded the Game Council of NSW. This came after an independent review of the Game Council by Steve Dunn reported the many incompetencies of the Council and that it promoted poor governance. ♦

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Car Accidents

Keith Maxwell, BWRS



Bushwalking safety should be a topic close to every bushwalker's heart. It does not have to be a complicated subject. You will have a high level of wilderness safety by following a simple list of "DO & DON'T" on the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) website www.bwrs.org.au

Bushwalking can involve a lot of car travel. Driving home after a long day bushwalking can present dangers. Many years ago a well-known bushwalker lost most of a leg in a car accident after a very late finish to an Easter trip with a long drive home. Now "Stop, Revive, Survive" can also mean stay put overnight and drive home in the morning. How useful will you be at work if you only got two hours sleep before work!!!

If you are unlucky enough to be the first to arrive at a car accident you may

appreciate your First Aid training and fully charged mobile phone (to call "triple zero" (000)) It has happened to BWRS members on the Jenolan Caves Road!!

First Aid is also a great skill to have for visitors to remote bush areas. For many years BWRS has offered First Aid courses for bushwalkers at a discount rate. Our Remote Area First Aid (RAFA) course now includes training on the treatment of gunshot wounds.

On SEPTEMBER 7/8 there will be a two day recertification course in RAFA. Bushwalkers must have previously obtained a RAFA Certificate to be eligible to attend this course.

On OCTOBER 12/13 & 26/27 there will be a full FOUR day RAFA course over TWO weekends. You will be required to camp overnight at the site.

On NOVEMBER 10 there will be a ONE day "Apply First Aid" course. While this course will not cover gunshot wounds it is a great way to learn some basic First Aid knowledge.

First Aid knowledge can save lives. RAFA training will give you confidence in emergencies in areas where medical help may take hours to arrive. Training in "Apply First Aid" is intended for areas where an ambulance and medical aid is much closer.

Registration for any of these First Aid courses can only be done at the BWRS website (see above). "Apply First Aid" requires that you have easy access to a computer for some required theory pre learning prior to the course.

Our BWRS First Aid courses must be a great way to learn First Aid in the company of fellow bushwalkers!

A Tour of the Budawangs

Yvonne Lollback
Springwood Bushwalking Club



Climbing The Castle - with the handleline.
Photo: Robert Sterry

The weather report promised that the wet conditions were nearly over, so three of us set off early Monday morning down the coast. Once we'd turned off at Milton, the rain started so we lunched in the picnic shelter below Pigeon House Mountain. But by the time we'd finished, the sky was clear.

Bravely we did our planned walk up to the summit via the fabulous ladders and stairs they've built near the top now. I do wonder how we used to get there when we only had two ladders to help us?! The Castle, our destination the next day, was still in mist but we were very optimistic by then. We camped at Long Gully that night and two more walkers, John and Nick, joined us Tuesday morning for our three day pack walk.

Five minutes into the day's walk, we were stopped by the raging waters of the Yadboro River. Usually an easy crossing, the water was well above my knees. So Barry went back to the car for a long rope he happened to have and we strung it from side to side. Stripped down to our

underwear - one down to less - we braved the cold, swirling waters of the mighty Yadboro and all crossed safely.

Once across, we set off on the long slog up the ridge. Walking became much more interesting once we started following the base of the lower set of cliffs below The Castle. This whole area is unique in that it consists of 2 plateaus on top of one another and therefore 2 sets of cliffs, with a flat section of varying widths, in between. The cliffs were still dripping from the recent rain but this made them more colourful.

At a junction, we had lunch and took the right hand track to go through 'The Tunnel', a natural cleft in the tail of The Castle leading to the other side where the summit climb begins. This tunnel isn't easy with a big pack but everyone helped everyone else. Once through, we gratefully left our packs, and started up.

This climb is not for the faint-hearted and that's before you even get to the section with ropes. Robert decided one section was too exposed and took an 'easier' route up a crack to its left. When he became temporarily stuck between a tree and a hard place, he saw the wisdom of the rock climb. I wish I'd had the camera because it would have been my action shot [or rather non-action shot] in the club's next photo comp!

At the top the views are breathtaking with the coast, the Clyde River valley, Byangee Walls, Pigeon House and the higher cliffs and pagodas of the Monolith Valley area - the next day's destination. The top is almost flat and quite easy walking so we headed to the southern edge for more great views. The valley we'd left that morning was 800 m below and seemed too far to do in one day.

Finally we tore ourselves away and went back for our packs and set up camp at Cooyoyo camp

nearby. The camp site is perched on the top of the lower cliffs below Shrouded Gods Mountain. Firewood is scarce but Robert did manage to get a small fire going and it wasn't too cold.

Next morning, we set off with day packs to explore Monolith Valley and surrounds.

The track up is very scenic and follows the creek with a chain just where it's needed. Two tags on trees did mislead us into using a very swampy, overgrown lower track but eventually we reached the valley at the lower end. Here there's a bridge. Leaving the exploration of the valley till later, we headed left to find our way up Mt Owen armed with a dotted line on the Coorang map and my dim memories from a previous walk. After a while we started descending and I



The climb up Pigeon House, now reduced to tourist level. Photo: Robert Sterry



Elegance in crossing the Yadboro.
Photo: Robert Sterry



The Budawangs from the top of The Castle. Photo: Robert Sterry

twigged that we weren't in the slot between Mt Owen and Mt Cole at all but heading for the sheer cliffs where the creek descends to the valley. Robert's GPS put us straight [what wonderful things they are to be sure] and soon we found the right slot and the track heading straight up the side of Mt Owen.

After a lot of scrambling, we sat down for morning tea at another indescribable viewing spot looking up into Monolith Valley and down to the distant Clyde River valley. The huge pagodas opposite and the Seven Gods Pinnacles at the top of the valley are different from the ones in the Gardens of Stone in that they don't have bands of ironstone sticking out: instead they have bands of some soft rock

which has eroded inwards every foot or so giving a scalloped appearance.

Lunch was at the southern-most point of Mt Owen, where we all had to have photos taken with The Castle in the background so we could show anyone who showed even the slightest interest just how high we'd come. The track out to there is overgrown, prickly and wet but very flat.

Then back to 'The Slot' again but at the western end this time, where we scrambled down to the base of Mt Cole. Here we started walking north along the base of these cliffs past four or more great sleeping caves, though I'm not sure you're officially allowed to use them anymore. One even has a waterfall nearby.



The Budawangs from the top of The Castle. Photo: Robert Sterry



Inside The Green Room. Photo: Robert Sterry

At the northern end, we climbed up through a magic narrow slot between Mt Cole and Donjon Mt to the top of Monolith Valley with Seven Gods Pinnacles on the left. Descending into the valley, the scenery became more and more beautiful as the sheer, mossy walls started closing in and it became darker until the creek level is reached. I've been there twice before but again, I was awestruck. I'm not sure if this is the Green Room or the whole lot is but it's all just fantastic. We didn't linger as long as I'd have liked as it was getting late but next time for sure. By the way, does anyone know why it's called Monolith Valley? There are lots of fantastic rocks but not just one monolith.

The arch came next. This I climbed into with a friendly shove from behind and soon the men followed for the compulsory 'I've-been-there' photos. Once back at the bridge, we knew we'd completed our circumnavigation of Mt Cole. The walk back to camp was easier as we stuck to the high track which is also very scenic. We remembered to collect firewood on the way down to the camp and had a very merry fire going in no time. We were a great little group with lots of fun and laughter.

Thursday morning we had a quick look at Cooyoyo creek where there's a huge overhang suitable to cook in if the weather is bad. We followed the creek to where it plunges over the cliff and once more enjoyed the views with misty clouds still lingering in the valleys. Then back down below the cliffs of The Castle and morning tea on the last lookout rock. The river was at a much more civilized level and we arrived back at the cars at about 2 pm.

It was truly a memorable walk. I honestly feel it must rank amongst the best in the world for variety, grandeur and beauty and is true wilderness as there is no other way to reach it but by walking. ♦

Historic Tracks around Mt Hotham

Andrew Swift

Cultural Heritage Officer and Walking Track Manager
Mt Hotham Alpine Resort

Historically the Great Dividing Range presented many challenges for the European pathfinders. The continent's largest physical barrier has thrown lofty peaks, thick vegetation, bushfires and snowstorms at those who ventured into her realm. For many decades now the highest peaks and their approaches have been a bushwalkers' mecca, yet the further we progress away from our roots the origins of the district's earliest tracks & trails has become lost.

Situated amidst Alpine National Park, Mt Hotham has a range of historic tracks and trails which reveal some of Victoria's earliest European history, yet like many early routes their history is hidden just beneath the surface.

Despite squatting runs being taken up from the mid-1830's in the foothills throughout the region, the higher ranges of Eastern Victoria were little explored by Europeans. Rich gold discoveries in early 1852 on both sides of the Range at Beechworth and Omeo attracted a large

Mining in the Upper Dargo



and industrious population to the district for the first time in history. Some 8,000 diggers had arrived at Beechworth in early 1852 and 100 were reported to be successfully working at Omeo. Further rich discoveries in the Buckland Valley in 1853 saw 6,000 rush the field. Driven by potential wealth and the shortest possible route to obtain it, the first Europeans to traverse this region were prospecting parties. The early diggers largely travelled on foot, carrying their provisions on their backs or pushing crudely fashioned wheelbarrows; more organised party's trailed pack-horses behind them. Well beaten tracks were rapidly formed by these first 'bushwalkers'.

Mt Feathertop and the Razorback

Described as 'Queen of the Victorian Alps', Mount Feathertop (1922 m) is the region's most popular hiking destination. In 1854, on the heels of the miners, Government Botanist Ferdinand von Mueller ascended Mt Feathertop. After von Mueller, the Bright Alpine Club formalised the destination with a winter ascent in 1889. The Bon Accord track, an earlier route up to the Razorback Spur, was opened by quartz reef miners in the early 1860's while working a number of gold-bearing reefs in the vicinity of



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Washington Creek. It was also a more direct route for travellers between Harrietteville and Omeo. Bushwalkers in the 1920's and 30's passed the ruins of abandoned mining camps and stamp batteries. In 1906 the Bungalow Spur route was cut, promoting ready walking access to Mt Feathertop from Harrietteville. Other approaches include the NW Spur track and the rugged Diamantina Spur, with the principal route along the spectacular Razorback Spur. Another long-overgrown and forgotten route was the government funded Razorback Mining track, which once junctioned near the Twin Knobs. This 4 ft wide track allowed the carting of heavy crushing machinery for the Razorback group of mines which were discovered in the locality by the Harrietteville Prospecting Association in 1893. For the more adventurous off-track walker the ruins of the 10-stamp battery and mine camp can still be found.

Machinery Spur, Mt Loch and the Red Robin

The track out past Mt Loch (1865 m), a remnant basalt cap, was first formed by a party led by Isaac Sloane, carting a heavy stamp battery in 1891 from the Upper Dargo to the Peterson Brothers mine on the West Kiewa River. The crew possibly had a longer smoko break than normal and perhaps pondered the iconic view of the southern side of Mt Feathertop. Machinery Spur is named for this feat. 50 years later the locality was the location of one of Victoria's last gold rushes when local prospector and pioneer of the Hotham Heights ski-field Bill Spargo discovered the rich Red Robin reef in 1941. After nearly perishing in the 1939 bushfires Spargo discovered the reef which had been laid bare by the fires. The initial two ton crushing gave a staggering yield of 173 ounces of gold. Today the mine is still working, with lucky walkers able to witness the mine and stamp battery in action.



Razorback Expedition, Battery 1

Brandy Creek Mine to the Cobungra River

(7 km return)

Ancient river systems, buried for millions of years beneath the basalt cap of the High Plains, were worked for gold deposits from the 1860s. The Brandy Creek mine sluicing operations washed an entire hillside away, releasing some 25,000 ounces of gold. The Cobungra Township was once situated adjacent to the mine, and consisted of a hotel, three stores, a butcher, a baker and a host of miners' huts and tents. A true ghost town, all that remains is a scatter of broken bottle glass along the track in vicinity of the briefly thriving township.

From the mine the Brandy Creek Fire Track continues 3 km down to the Cobungra River, a clear and remote stream that was once accessed by an overgrown track known as Dungeys. All the flats along the stream were once taken up by mining leases in a rush in 1883, however the anticipated gold yields never lived up to expectations. Dungeys Track extended from Bright to Omeo via the Cobungra Diggings and the Brandy Creek mines. It was first chosen by Mounted Constable Arthur Dungey of Harrietteville in 1884 as an all-seasons route that avoided crossing Mt Hotham during winter where snow blizzards had claimed the lives of many travellers. The track soon became impassable due to fallen timber after mining activity had waned by the turn of



Harrietteville, Bungalow Spur workers



Spargo's Hut. Keith Moody Collection

the Century. It was re-opened briefly for tourism by the Bright Progress Association in the 1920's, though again became impassable after the 1939 bushfires. The grassy flats along the Cobungra River have been quiet ever since, save for a few grazing cattle and the occasional bushwalker.

Mt Tabletop Walk

(10 km return)

Known also as Square Mountain, this distinctive flat plateau was used by early travellers through the region as a landmark. The Tabletop track was first opened with gold discoveries on the Upper Dargo River in the early 1860s. The track was formed in about 1863 when Mayford, a small mining township, was established on the Dargo River. Today the walking track ends on the plateau, but the original track continued on to the Square Mount sluicing claim and camp and thence down the main spur to Mayford.

The Cobungra Ditch

(12.5 km one way)

One of the few interpreted historic walking tracks in the area, the Cobungra Ditch follows the course of an abandoned water race which supplied water for the hydraulic sluicing operations at the Brandy Creek mines. The ditch was cut by the Cobungra Gold Mining Company in 1884 at the cost of £11,000, and employed upwards of 120 men in its construction. The investment in the water race and the mine saw both Bright and Omeo shires upgrade the pack-track between Bright and Omeo into a road suitable for horse-drawn vehicles. Today this road is known as the Great Alpine Road. Interpretation signs along the course of the Ditch describe the history of the water race and its construction. The feature is retained for much of its length by ancient looking dry-stone walls and passes through snowgum and mountain ash forests.

The Huts Walk

(21 km circuit)

This track links three huts. The principal one is the heritage-registered Spargo's Hut. This corrugated iron and bush pole hut was built by Bill and Cecil Spargo in 1927-28. Constructed for Bill's prospecting and mining activities in an area known as Golden Point, he spent many years eking out a living working shallow alluvial gold deposits in the locality until his discovery of the Red Robin reef in 1941. During the 1939 bushfires Bill was holed up in his little cabin surrounded by vessels filled with water. As the fire took hold of the building he was able to successfully douse and extinguish the flames and save the hut and his own life. He also had beside him a loaded rifle



Razorback Mine, Harrietville

should the fire become unbearable. This hut has been described as the Mawson's hut of the region with many of Spargo's items still in the hut, including his steel framed bed and a large turned-leg dining table.

To walk along any track and know at least some of the stories that occurred in places along its length makes for a far more engaging bushwalking experience. The Alpine National Park around Mt Hotham and the Bogong High Plains has numerous walking tracks to explore and an even greater history to discover. For further information on these tracks, visit www.mthotham.com.au or www.parksvic.gov.au

Andrew Swift has roamed the remote corners of the mountains of Eastern Victoria for nearly thirty years, exploring, working and documenting the forgotten and remote mining history of the region. He has given numerous presentations, written books and presented documentaries on this fascinating history. ♦



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Castle Rocks, Munghorn

Johanna Mitchell, Mudgee Bushwalking Club

Our group, Mudgee Bushwalking Club Inc & Bike Riders, have just clocked up 20 years of Bushwalking as a group. What better way to celebrate the occasion than to go for a bushwalk? We believe the walk to Castle Rocks in Munghorn Nature Reserve may have been the first walk the original members took so we revisited this walk on the weekend.

Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve is part of the Great Dividing Range and is about 35 km from Mudgee, on Munghorn 8833-2-S. This is a particularly important place for the Wiradjuri people, and has 164 recorded species of birds including the endangered regent honeyeater. The Castle Rock walking track offers an easy 8 km return walk of about 1 hour each way. There are stunning views from the Sandstone 'pagoda' rock formations at the end of the track and beyond. The track

is for walkers only. The carpark area has one table with seats and no toilet facilities.

We were delighted that even due to the long weekend etc we had 26 members for the walk, and two members were over 80 yrs old. [*The author does not record whether the 'oldies' led from the front or not! - Ed*]

While enjoying the views from the top of the 'Castle Rocks' the majority had their lunch while others were content to mind the lower portion of rock and enjoy the flora & fauna down there. ♦

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Mudgee Bushwalking Club, 20th Anniversary

LETTER TO THE EDITOR. . .

Hunting in National Parks

I read with interest Bushwalking NSW's first newsletter and note with concern the comment by President David Trinder that ... the best we can do is to force restrictions on hunting ... If Bushwalking NSW accepts this position I am sure it would be contrary to the views of most members.



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Send your name and address and cheque or money order to **Bushwalking NSW**, PO Box 119, Newtown NSW 2042. Phone: 9565 4005. Make the cheque or money order payable to the 'Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc' as well: please do not abbreviate the name! (Yes, the bank account still uses the old name so far. That may change - one day!)

Please indicate which issue you want your subscription to start with. We don't want to duplicate copies you already have.

There is no place for recreational hunting in the National Parks of NSW whatsoever. It is a stupid and dangerous idea. It benefits no one except hunters (who already have access to State Forests and private land) leaving bushwalkers and other park users as the losers.

Recreational hunting will be ineffective in reducing feral animal numbers below their breeding rates and may interfere with current control programmes. Feral animal control should be left to professional park managers employing science based programmes of proven effectiveness. The \$19 million proposed by Premier O'Farrell for administration of amateur hunting would be better directed to these programmes.

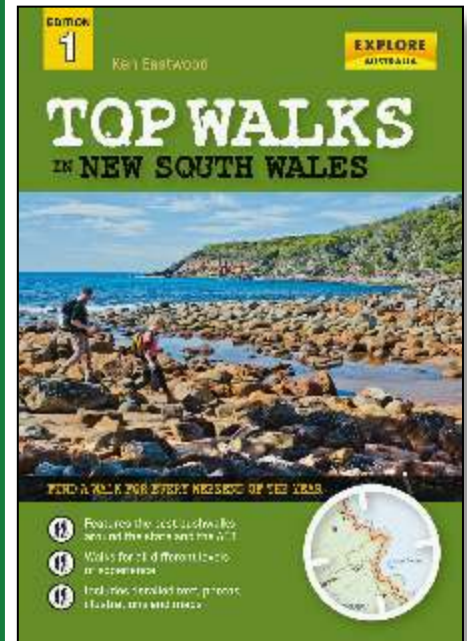
Recreational hunting in National Parks poses a very real and unacceptable risk to park users, particularly bushwalkers because we are likely to pop up in areas where we aren't expected by hunters.

Of all the organisations opposing hunting in National Parks I would expect Bushwalking NSW to take the strongest stand due to the very real risk it poses to our members. Let's have no more talk of compromise.

Ian Olsen
Coast and Mountain
Walkers of NSW

[To be fair, I think David Trinder was really expressing some despair, as it was very unlikely that the State government would take more notice of the Confederation than of the demands of the Shooters and Fishers Party. In the event it would seem that the whole thing is, for the moment at least, becoming moot. The departmental report was damning. I imagine the Shooters and Fishers will still be trying, but maybe Barry has got the message. Ed.]

Book Review



Top Walks in New South Wales

Ken Eastwood
ISBN 13 9781741173949 \$35

A small paper-back book of 360 pages, in colour, with a moderately waterproof cover. Too big for a pocket, but it would fit easily in a day pack.

The book has about 64 walks in it. Most of these are day walks, with a few listed as taking 2 - 3 days. I will add that some of the 2 day walks could be covered in one day - we have done them in that time. So obviously the difficulties are not great everywhere. The author claims there are some 'serious challenges that will test even hardened walkers', but I couldn't see any. On the other hand, he does say 'many of the routes described are suitable for families and mixed age groups', and that seems a better description.

The areas covered are Sydney region, Blue Mountains, South Coast, ACT and Snowy Mts, North East and Western NSW. You would need to do a lot of travelling to cover all the walks listed. Whether it makes sense to try to cover all of NSW in one book is a good question.

Each walk gets a summary of key details, a bit of a topo map, and then a fair route description. The key details include comments about the trackhead or start, suitable weather conditions, and the nearest food (and toilets). Experienced walkers (ie club members) will have no problems following the route description, but novices should read the text carefully.

Each walk has several nice colour photos, plus drawings or photos of relevant animals or plants. The colour balance in the printing is uniformly good.

Most of the route descriptions are fairly accurate, although I did find some small errors. The farmer met at Blue Gum Forest was not really 'determined to cut the trees down'; the route from Blacks Range to the descent down to Jenolan does not go along the road as shown (it takes a fire trail from the camp site below the road); and so on. None of them are really serious.

Roger Caffin



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The National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) has a great bushwalking program across the state. However, it is our conservation advocacy that sets us apart from many other bushwalking clubs. If you are worried about the threats to our national parks and want to help protect them, please join NPA or donate to our conservation programs.



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