

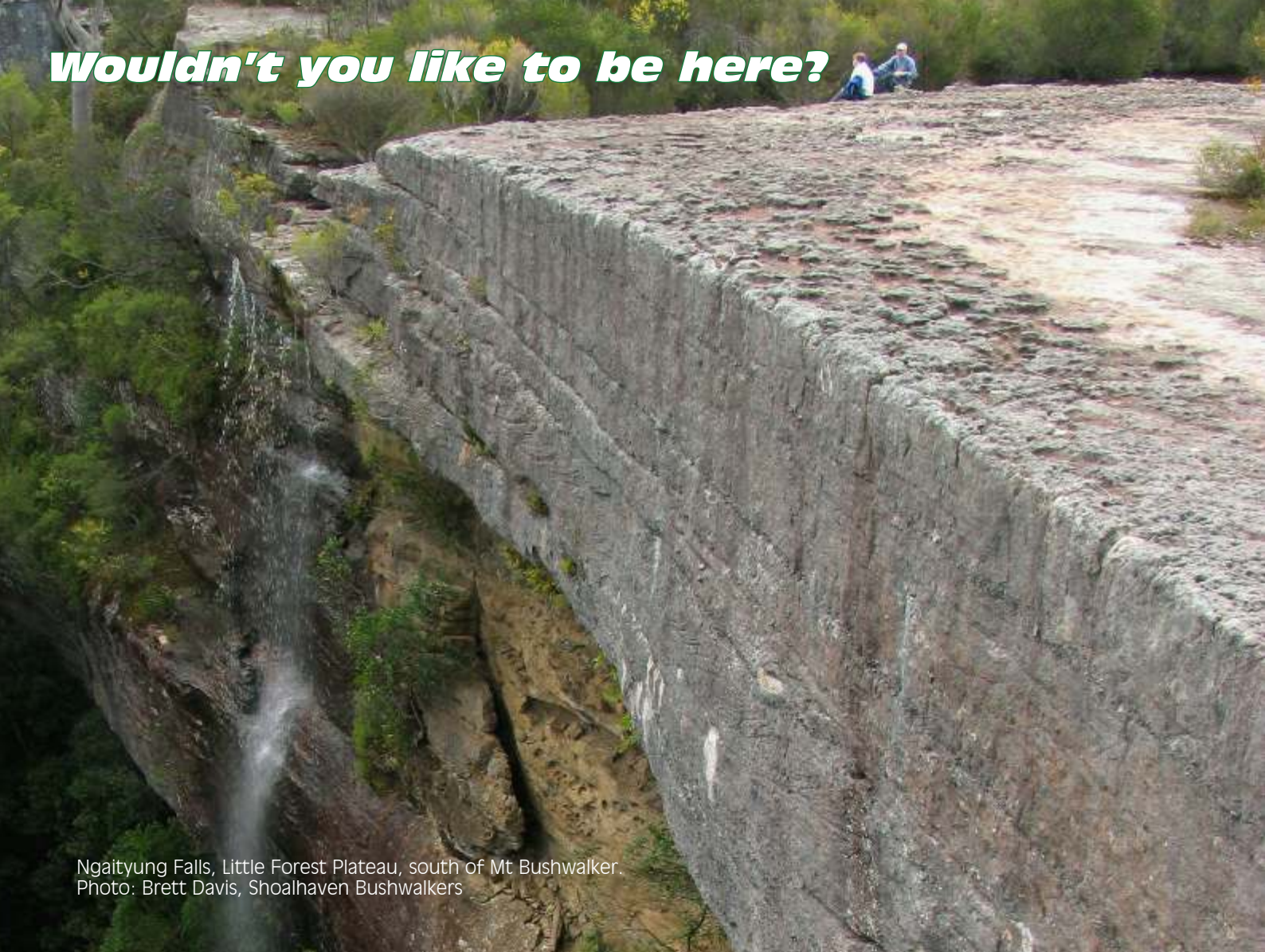
The Bushwalker



**Descending from Pic d'Anie plateau,
GR10, Pyrenees, France**

**Volume 40
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Wouldn't you like to be here?



Ngaityung Falls, Little Forest Plateau, south of Mt Bushwalker.
Photo: Brett Davis, Shoalhaven Bushwalkers



Huayhuash Circuit, Peru, with Trapecio peak in the background, day 4 of 11
days walking, July 2015 Photo: Linda Groom, Canberra Bushwalking Club

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Bushwalking NSW Inc represents approximately 68 Clubs with a total membership of about 12,000 bushwalkers.

Formed in 1932, Bushwalking NSW provides a united voice on behalf of all bushwalkers on conservation, access and other issues.

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contains a list of clubs and lots of useful information on bushwalking, including the Australian Bushwalking FAQ.



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Front Cover: Descending from the Pic d'Anie plateau, GR10 Pyrenees, France.
Photo: Roger Caffin.

From the editor's desk. . .

The front cover shows us descending from the plateau under the Pic d'Anie on the GR10 in the Pyrenees. The plateau is a totally unreal place - kilometres and kilometres of jumbled limestone boulders, with the pointy Pic d'Anie rising up in the middle.

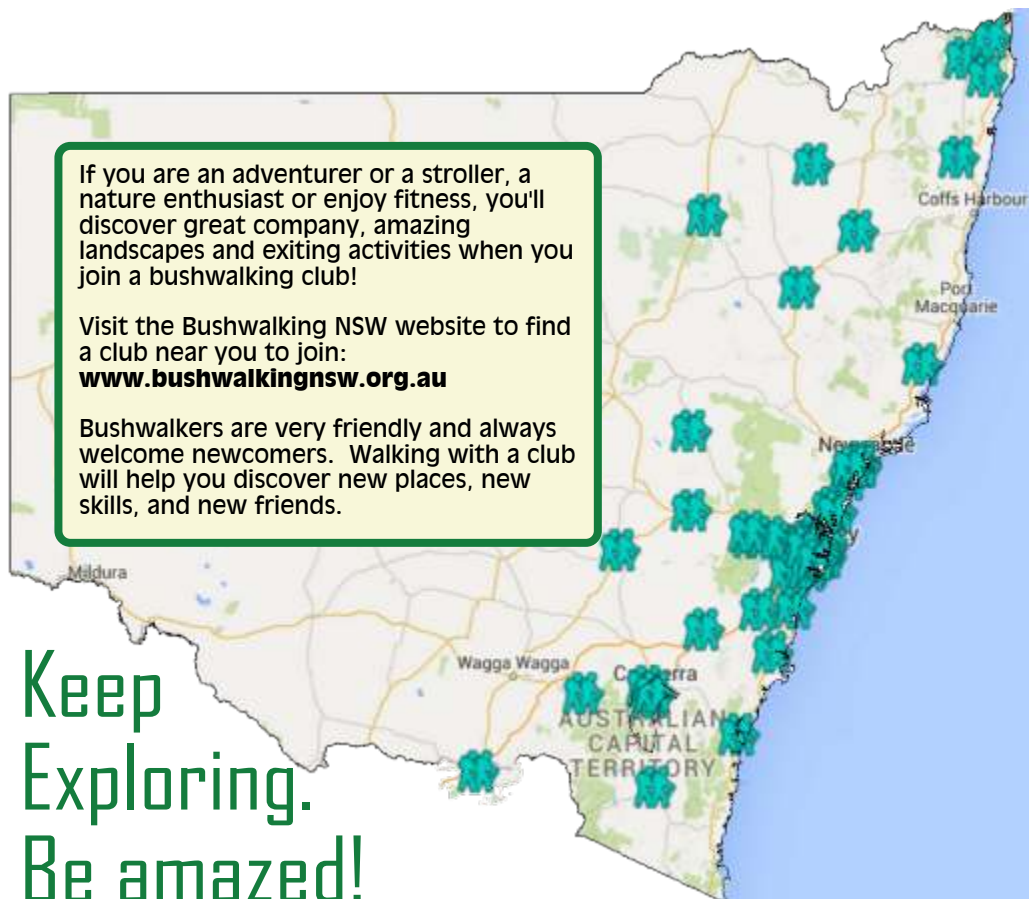
Watch your step on that stuff, because if you slip then one of two unpleasant things will happen to you. You could go down one of the thousands of narrow limestone slots which go deep underground, never to be seen again. Oh well, you would probably get jammed half way down as the slots are very narrow, but getting out could be an interesting exercise. Alternately, you might not go right into a slot: you might just impale yourself on one of the razor sharp edges and scrape all the skin off your arms and legs. I am not sure which would be worst.

Fortunately the weather was fine, and that sort of limestone is a bit like very coarse sandpaper: grippy! Anyhow, once you go through the Col d'Anie you reach much 'softer' grassy terrain, as shown on the cover. Around the corner it flattened out a bit and we stopped for lunch on the grass.

Roger Caffin
Editor

Articles for Publication

We are always happy to receive pictures for publication, even if there is no story. Send them in!





Looking across the Mt Banks face. Photo: Brian Fox

Walking the Traverse of the Gods

Michael Keats
The Bush Club

Arrive at cliff top, rest: 555 803, 11:10.
Continue: 11:20.
Arrive vehicle: 553 812, 11:40.

In speaking with Graeme before the walk, he said:

I first heard that the terrace 'goes' from Peter Treseder, possibly when showing him Orang Utan Pass on 27/3/93. Peter had been doing some climbing on Mount Banks at the time. I don't know if her earlier climbers discovered it.

If ever a place name captured the imagination this one surely did. The name was coined by Phil Foster of Springwood Bushwalkers in 2013. Having just completed the walk on Sunday 7th June 2015, I have to fully endorse the name. There was a point on the walk when I felt very much that I was on an assignment to meet my maker. Others are perhaps better than I at disguising their true thoughts or perhaps I am just getting too old for this kind of caper.

Nature provided a brilliant winter day, glorious sunshine and a cloudless sky. The only down side was a rising wind that increased up to 30 knots in the early afternoon. During the walk in sheltered areas we were comfortably warm, in exposed areas we chilled down rapidly. Temperature range from 10 to 15 C.

Mount Banks is part of the Explorers Range, which is located along the northern escarpment of the Grose Valley in the Blue Mountains National Park. The range starts at Bells Line of Road (W end) and extends E along the northern edge of the Grose Valley. Mount Banks is the first noticeable peak along the range and is about 2 km S of the Bells Line of Road. It was named Mount Banks in 1804 by the explorer George Caley, who had worked for the botanist Sir Joseph Banks. Caley was the first European to reach and climb Mount Banks.

The distinctive thing about Mount Banks is the way the terrain and vegetation change radically approaching the top of the mountain. For the first two-thirds of the walk to the summit, the terrain is the standard sandstone of the Sydney and Blue Mountains regions, with a thin, rough scrub. After this, however, there is a volcanic basalt plug which gives rise to a richly vegetated summit with grass and a canopy. Views can be had on the lower slopes of the mountains but

there is no view at the top, unless the walker edges down the slope towards the escarpment, at which point there are views of the Grose Valley.

Bushwalkers Notes.

The earliest documented notes I have about this walk were recorded by Graeme Holbeach who completed the walk on 5th September 1996. Economical on words, Graeme's log records:

Conditions... generally clear and sunny all day; fairly warm; light NW wind; slight cloud cover developing late afternoon.

Commenced walking: 553 812, 07:50. Arrived at cliff line, Banks Wall, Top: 559 789, 08:40.

Descend to terrace (about 10 m) and then continue north along the base of the cliff line into a large recess at 557 803.

Exit this rain forest area at the upper level and follow terrace around the corner for 100 m to where a very deep slot cuts into the cliff line (approx. 555 803).

To get to end of the slot where it is safe to cross it is necessary to traverse on a narrow ledge around a short corner.

Exit the area at a slightly higher level and then proceed around the corner for about 100 m for an easy short climb to the top.

Never content to repeat a walk done by another, or even previously by himself, leader Yuri Bolotin added a twist to the walk as previously done by Graeme Holbeach and Peter Medbury by testing the proposition that Banks Wall could be walked from the end of Frank Hurley Head. More about that later.

The group set off from the recognised picnic parking area at 08:34, noting with disgust the theft of the plaque commemorating the westernmost point of George Caley's epic journey 14th November 1804. Caley was the first European to climb Mount Banks and possibly the first white person to gaze into the valley of the Upper Grose.

The first part of the walk was on the made trail that encircles the eastern flanks of Mount Banks. Good time was made with the rock shelf lookout at the cliff edge being reached at 09:32. After gazing



North up the Grose Valley. Photo: Roger Caffin

at the view for some minutes and taking pictures of the stunning sandstone walls, Yuri suggested that we should first test the walking ledge going south to see how far it would go. This proved not only to go but added another 20% to the length of the Traverse of the Gods. Irreverently I suggested we could create some new gods.

This added section of ledge walking took us to the end of Frank Hurley Head, and high above the deep chasm of Gordon Smith Chimney to our east. Future walks of the Traverse could have a more dramatic start by commencing from this point. Frank Hurley Head is covered in very low heath and is an easy delightful walk.

At 10:10 we were back at the point where most walkers of the Traverse start. Despite pleas for morning tea to be in the sun on the top of the cliff edge, it was not to be. We opted instead for a draughty cave cum overhang along the ledge [*it wasn't that bad! - Ed*]. The views were stunning and included Govetts Leap, Anvil Rock and much of the Upper Grose Valley.

Progress along the ledge was quite rapid and at 10:57 we scrambled out to a small rock platform, with photo opportunities of the way forward. You just needed to make sure that one arm was firmly around a strong tree while manipulating the camera with the other arm.

The ledge is anything but 'level' and there were many little climbs and descents as we followed the bottom edge of the cliff line. There was also great variety ranging from dry rocky overhangs to sandy patches, rocky scrambles and lots of scrub. At 11:15, we came across a very old installation of an abseiling anchor point. The bolts were rusty and the set rope looked very much beyond its use by date. The rock climbers in the party didn't want to know!

Minutes later there was a choice: one way higher and one way lower. The higher option was tested. It terminated at a sandy cave. Twenty minutes later we were back on the correct ledge and making good progress. In many ways, this was the theme for the whole day. Even though this area is not often walked the flattening of the under storey into an almost defined pad probably indicates use

by rock climbers and abseilers.

At 11:43 an orchid species growing from the cliff face was noted. A seed head showed it to be a hooded species. I had seen similar in the cliffs of Carne Creek. Based on this and checking my notes it is more than likely *Rimacola elliptica*.

By 11:58 we had made it to a special place named by Phil Foster as 'The Abode of the Mountain Spirit'.

This is a tight, 'U' shaped indentation in the cliffs that appears to be also the location of a decaying volcanic dyke. Basalt boulders are included in the downstream debris and an unusual breccia with fragments of sandstone and basalt is located on the northern side. High up in the overhanging partial roof there appears to be different rock to the surrounding sandstone. One could assume this dyke is associated with the basalt plug forming the top of Mt Banks.

Leaving this area there was a complete change in vegetation. It was a Myrtle Forest, with occasional Coachwood Trees and lots of Rough Tree Ferns *Cyathea australis* exhibiting signs of water stress. The first examples of Lawyer Vine made their presence felt.

We moved through this enclosed area of forest and onto an exposed cliff face, then back into a more protected area of the cliff line. Here an amazing artefact was found: one of the vanes from the former King George Trig, located on top of Mount Banks several hundred metres above. How did it get here - particularly as the cliff is undercut? A possible explanation is that it was thrown over the edge and due to its disc like shape was caught by a wind eddy and pulled back into the cliffs. We carefully left it there.



Yes, there is a ledge here! Photo: Brian Fox



The Abode of the Mountain Spirit
Photo: Brian Fox



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Morning Tea, just don't drop anything. Photo: Brian Fox



Tree ferns in the Devils Throat. Photo: Brian Fox



At 13:14 we entered the most challenging part of the walk: and the area named as The Devils Throat by Phil Foster. This is a truly vertiginous location. Again it is a 'U' shaped defile, but unlike 'The Abode of the Mountain Spirit', it is so tight and so deep the bottom cannot be seen.

To negotiate around this challenging feature two very narrow ledges must be negotiated. From the south side it is necessary to descend about 5 m to avoid a terminal ledge which looks down the abyss, then you traverse a rather narrow wet ledge while making sure you don't bang your head. That could have unfortunate consequences. Then you cross a small water course then climb about 5 m through a horde of tree ferns to another ledge on the northern side. It is at this point where great self-discipline must be applied.

To cross the northern side of the mouth of the throat a narrow and confined ledge less than 25 cm wide has to be negotiated. This can be done by sitting on your backside facing outwards and then edging your way across a distance of about 1.5 m. It is not easy, and you get a wet bum. The cliff wall behind you pushes outward. The view below is hypnotic and a fall would be fatal. Helping hands from above and below enabled me to complete this crossing. Many others, I think were also glad of support as well. A couple of climbers in the party managed the traverse facing the cliff, inwards, but said it was a bit thin with no handholds. But no wet bum you see.

After the crossing of the Devils Throat it was a short walk and scramble to a jutting out point. This location is without peer along the Banks Wall. The 'point' is more an island connected by an isthmus less than 2 m wide. The 'island' is about 8 m by 3 m in surface area, and pretty flat on top. Some low scrub blocked any wind. Lucky for us the sun shone brilliantly and it was a superb spot to enjoy lunch. I likened it very much to a miniature Flying Carpet on the Carne Creek cliffs.

Leaving the lunch spot behind there was some more exposed cliff circling that culminated in a short scramble up a (mostly holdless) rock face. With this climb behind us we had now reached the beginning of the northern flank of Mount Banks. An old cairn was located on a rock platform. It had no apparent immediate significance. Was it an indicator for abseiling parties, or was it a marker for the start of the Traverse in the other direction?

The forest in the area is still recovering from bushfires. It was quite open and the under storey was bursting with life. Purple Pattersonias and pink Boronias provided splashes of colour. Out of the forest the gentle flanks of the mountain were dominated by low heath plants. Yet we were not finished our adventure. Rather than climb up high, the base of a low cliff line was followed. It featured shallow overhangs, together with a view of a pulpit rock adjoining a deep scooped out canyon. Several members of the party just had to visit this. The afternoon winter sun provided a glorious backdrop, lighting up the Grose River cliffs.

The access track to Mount Banks was found on the lower slopes. The vehicles were reached at 14:30. Total distance walked about 12 km. ♦

The northern end of the Traverse.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin



Bellinger River, Mist descending.
Below bottom: Views of the river.

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NEW ENGLAND WILDERNESS WALK

Nancy Ainsworth
Watagan Wanderers

After reading an article about the New England Wilderness Walk in the Great Walks Magazine, June/July 2012, I decided it was a walk that needed to be done. The walk begins from the edge of the New England Tableland at the headwaters of the Bellinger River, descends over 1200 m and passes through the most extensive area of subtropical rainforest in the world. The trail commences near Point Lookout following Robinsons Knob Trail, goes down to Grasstree Ridge and into Sandy Creek. On reaching the valley floor Sandy Creek is followed to its junction with the Bellinger River. The Bellinger River is then followed using old and sometimes overgrown logging/cattle roads and disused farm roads to the end at Cool Creek Crossing at Darkwood.

Ten Wanderers and a friend began the walk on a very warm morning from Robinsons Knob car park. The trail was in excellent condition until we met a large fallen tree. We continued and struggled in the now extremely hot conditions to the first campsite at Scraggy Creek. The information supplied by the National Parks and Wildlife Service suggests camping here, but perhaps it may be better to camp earlier at the smaller site at Sunday Creek, making the first day a little shorter. After all, 20 km on a very hot day with the 1200 m drop occurring in the first 14.5 km makes for a very challenging day. Perhaps another day could be added to the whole walk as well to allow time for exploring the upper reaches of the Bellinger River. Supposedly there are some beautiful waterfalls up there and an interesting

feature on Crescent Ridge created by the Ebor Volcano.

On the second day some of us walked back to the junction of the Bellinger River and Sunday Creek and explored upstream, but time constraints prevented us reaching any falls and we had to move on. We followed and crossed the Bellinger River for the most part, sometimes on old cattle/logging tracks. "Creative" creek crossings were used to avoid wet feet, and some crawling through undergrowth to avoid huge meanders in the river were highlights of the day. The number and size of the elk horns and stag horns were admired by all. Winch Flat was the suggested campsite, but after much

searching there was no cleared or suitable site, so some set up on the verandah of a long abandoned farmhouse and others on an old farm road for a wet night.

Day three began and we mostly followed the old Brinerville-Thora road beside the river. The going was relatively easy passing through grassy plains on river flats. We were able to spend time looking at some of the abandoned farm houses, farmed from the 1890s to around 1950. A double storey concrete structure or bunker below one of the buildings had us puzzled.

We reached Cool Creek Crossing without as much hard going through heavy undergrowth and lantana as had been suggested in the walk notes. A leisurely lunch by the Bellinger was enjoyed while we waited for transport back to our cars: a slow trip up the Dorrigo range under eerie, misty foggy conditions.



Abandoned farm house

NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL PARK

After the Wilderness Walk, we returned to the Thungutti Camping area. From the escarpment there are about seven walks that can be combined to make a very full day. We combined quite a few of them to enjoy an amazing day. We walked from the campsite along Tea Tree Falls Walk, a tea tree woodland that winds its way up to Toms Cabin while passing through a forest of hanging moss. We then joined the Weeping Rock Track which took us down into a spectacular mossy Antarctic Beech forest. We thought we would be



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seeing dinosaurs. Weeping Rock was admired by all, a basalt cliff face covered in mosses and ferns and dripping with water. This track led on to Eagles Nest Track through rainforest and snow gums and up to Point Lookout. Unfortunately the view across the escarpment was obscured by the low valley mist/cloud but beautifully eerie in its own way.

We linked the Lyrebird Track next to go from the cliff top down through the ancient forest again and headed off to Wrights Lookout. The track to the Lookout was in complete contrast to the rest of the day. It was across a rocky plateau with spectacular panoramic views and low heath vegetation in flower. We were on top of a remnant of the Ebor Volcano, looking down the Bellinger Valley. After a very full but thoroughly enjoyable day we made our way back to the campsite at Thungutti. This was a great spot for us to camp and I can't speak highly enough of the area. Walks are really well sign-posted, maintained and very scenic. ♦




Track near Thungutti Camping area
Camp at Scraggy Ck
A little frog





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Wolgan Walk

A bad start: Alex had a dinner and a BBQ with friends the night before, so when I called him to say I'd be a little late to Flemington Station to meet him, he picked up after a couple of rings and told me he was still in bed, and I had woken him with my call. Good thing I called. We decided to meet at a station closer to his house in light of the lateness, and once united we drove on to Lithgow. Alex drove and I chatted, actually.

In Lithgow we picked up the Lithgow Topographic map, which we needed for the first couple of kilometres of our walk down the river. We bought the map from a news agent (Newslink, I'm pretty sure) on the main street. If you are ever stuck in Lithgow missing a topographic map, it was good to know they would be open on a Sunday. Maps make spontaneous diversions from the plan around that area easier.

Before we left Lithgow we also stopped by a supermarket to pick up some food items to supplement our cobbled-together food rations for the trip. Then we drove off towards the zigzag railway and beyond, up towards Bungleboori State Forest and on to Sunnyside Ridge. We stopped to check out a shiny and new looking power station of some kind. Alex photographed it with his GPS. We drove along the power lines and then moved onto Blackfellow's Hand Road.

By the time we got to the proposed starting point of our journey it was late, around midday. We set off promptly in the heat, with the sun at its zenith. Alex commented on the size of my pack as we set off. It was somewhat bigger and heavier than his. While he does sleep on an absurdly tiny sleeping mat that weighs nothing, I wondered what other unnecessary extras I had brought that would make my pack heavier than his. It is always a little embarrassing as a bushwalker when your pack is big because of unnecessary luxury items. People enjoy ridiculing the comforts others decide to bring along, and wonder whether they are aware of the effort they will have to expend for the extra weight - or are innocent of it. About an hour into our

walk, I brought up the subject of pack weight again and started going over items that were heavy or bulky in my pack. The second item I suggested revealed a major deficiency in Alex's lightweight packing; he had not packed a sleeping bag! This was not such a problem since my sleeping bag was plenty big enough to cover three or even four people, however I had a good laugh about it. It came out that this pack was the one Alex had packed for a Three Peaks attempt that had never gotten off the ground the previous Tuesday. One does not pack a sleeping bag for a trip where one will continue walking through the night without rest. It was weird, though, that he had his sleeping mat and not his sleeping bag. We decided we didn't need to return for extra clothing from the car. We'd just have to make do. An hour of walking was too much to repeat, and the evenings and days were so warm and it would only be the one night.

The "headwaters", as they are called, in fact do not exist in the Wolgan's western arm. They are at least not very present above ground. There was provision for water to be there, such as dams, and a

Sierra Classen
Photos: Alex Allchin

weir-like apparatus that must have been put up as part of environmental testing projects. A summary of the headwaters would be that the creek area looks like varying degrees of nearly-dead to dead, until you get to the place where the other branch of the Wolgan enters from the East. This latter arm seems to carry most of the above-ground water to the Wolgan River, even though the two arms have catchment areas of the same size! No prizes for guessing which arm had had longwall mining beneath it, despite all the claims from the mining company.

Most of the interesting mining-related aspects of the creek were in this dry upper section. To start with, most of the bed was dry and dead. We hypothesized that the vegetation may have been drowned from an upstream mine water discharge point that we had passed earlier. We walked through some swamps where the soil was cooked dry and all the grass and bushes were skeletal. Interestingly, the soil was still bouncy in these sections. Alex made a video of us walking with a spring in our step, artificially created by the ground we were walking on. This contrasted to our mood, which was lower and lower as the sun seemed to grow hotter and everything around us seemed to grow progressively deadier. It was like it was cringing and



crumbling around us, and the air was vibrating with insects.

There were numerous boreholes and survey markers as we walked along. We opened one of the caps on the bore holes and there was some kind of measuring instrument inside. We took a photo with Alex's GPS camera. We weren't quite sure what the instrument was supposed to measure, but think it may have been used to track changes in the depth of the water table, which looks to be quite low at this point. It was a long way down to the water.

Walking was quite easy initially. There were well-trodden paths along the banks. However, after a kilometre or so, our pace became uneven. Trees, branches, and bushes seemed to have been ripped out and thrown across the path in many places. For a long time, Alex and I passed the time speculating at the motive that might lie behind deliberately obscuring the path with violently dismembered vegetation. It took a surprisingly long time to establish that it was not a deliberate act. It was so focused on the neat path that had been cut. We thought whoever cut the track might want to obscure their tracks, when in fact we suspect the vandal was a particularly violent bout of Blue Mountains storms. The frequent detours from a perfectly maintained track to circumvent the scrawled obstacles of dismembered trees were oddly frustrating. It was much harder to be annoyed about this once we had concluded that nature was the culprit, rather than someone seeking to hinder the passage of walkers towards what lay ahead.

Probably the most exciting thing we encountered in the dead section of the creek was the string of artificial swamp construction sites. Before these sites came a long pipe that may have been for drainage. It appeared not to be in use when we passed it, because there was only a small amount of water in its end trough. It seemed likely that this water was rainwater, rather than effluent from the pipe. The swamp construction sites



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warrant some explanation. The first one we saw was an expanse of dead branches on top of sandbags, sand and coarse fabric below. The area was subdivided by stakes and barriers between rectangular sections. Around the area were roughly hidden tools and piles of supplies swathed in black plastic. Further on, we came to more unfinished artificial swamps.

We decided they were artificial swamps because they were in the place where the swamps would have been if they had not been drowned and then cooked until dead. They also seemed to be attempting to mimic the water drainage dynamics of a swamp. From what Alex and I had recently learned about the impacts of mining on swamps and water tables from Keith Muir of the Colong Foundation, trying to recreate the drainage qualities of swamps seemed to be less than ideal solution. We are still seeking information on this topic. From our discussion, it seems that if these artificial swamps, while they look fancy,



do not solve the problem of the ground water having been sucked away and then drenched back en masse. Sure, the drainage in these sites might do a good impression of a swamp, but it seems that even swamps may not be equipped to handle the rate that the effluent reaches them in this context. This is worth investigating. There was a complex layering system in the constructed swamps, which can be seen in our video footage. Layers included loose sand, gravel, some kind of hemp or grass matting, sandbags, and sticks and branches. These layers were separated by hessian fabric.

After the swamp construction sites, we encountered areas of the creek bed which were affected by upsidence (similar to subsidence but acting in the upwards direction). The sandstone had risen and buckled, leaving large cracks all over the place. This was most interesting to see, while it was not good news for the creek. We had only read about this phenomenon in mined areas until that point.

Soon after the sections of upsidence, we came to the junction of the Eastern and Western branches of the Wolgan river headwaters. Suddenly, there was water in the creek that wasn't under the category of scungy holes filled with rainwater. We ventured a little ways up the Eastern branch to do some water testing (water

quality was excellent!) and had some much needed lunch.

The next section of the creek was an exemplary specimen of a healthy ecosystem. There was an expansive swamp that seemed in perfect working order. This section was worse for walking on for those who may have had aspirations of keeping dry feet. The creek wound in deep hairpin curves from then on — for little apparent reason. We crossed many times over because it was much quicker. Soon, we were quite wet and Alex did an impression of drowning Ophelia from Hamlet in one particularly beautiful section of the creek.

The walking was so quick that we surpassed all of our wildest (scrub-anticipating) expectations. We camped at the section of the creek directly before it starts into a sequence of cliff-cradled hairpin bends to the west. Gardens of Stone fanatic Yuri Bolotin had provided us with some route advice, and had also warned us to watch for shooting stars. We set up camp on a low pinnacle of rock with a clear view of the sky. It was a pretty ideal camping spot: sheltered from the wind by tall gum trees and slightly taller pagodas; close to the creek, but not muddled by it; flat, but softened by leaf litter and moss... Ideal. We made a tasty curry using a Back Country Chicken Tikka Masala as a base and adding mushrooms, garlic, and a spice mix I had prepared at home. Yum yum! I also tried to make tortillas from scratch, but the result was quite lumpy. We ate them happily with the curry because we were hungry, but I think that normally I would have made a new batch that was more edible. It was very difficult to make smooth dough with the limiting element of a tiny bowl and no counter space. I would love to go bushwalking with someone who had better bush baking skills than I so I could learn from them. We could do a class!

The following day, since we had made such good progress already, we slept in because we knew we only had a short distance to go before arriving at Wolgan Falls, one of our objectives. We didn't know that within that distance would be a deep quagmire of ferns hiding a crisscross of fallen logs from years of storms. It was extremely slow wading through the ferns, dodging spiders in the creek, clambering inelegantly over logs, and rock scrambling through what could easily be termed a canyon-y creek. So many climb downs and scrambles. It was starting to get really fun, but we also kept expecting the black sludge swim that had been promised in this section, and we looked forward to the waterfall at the end. I, if not Alex, often got caught up in the obstacle game of logs and rocks, forgetting where we were going, forgetting to visualize the topographic map sections as we went. It was excellent fun, like I said.

When we finally came to the would-be sludge swim, it was just murky and muddy. [We had to Lilo it when we did it - Ed] Nothing sinister. When we finally arrived at the waterfall, we were glad for lunch and a nap before we sought a pass up the unyielding cliff line. We debriefed over lunch, deciding not to attempt a



descent of the waterfall via the right hand landslide face.

We found a great pass up the cliff (only the second attempt). We had to pass packs only once. It was just enough to make us feel like we were making worthy use of our handline. It's a good feeling when you use everything in your pack except your first aid kit. Climbing up through the pagoda laced cliffs is great fun. At the particular spot we were, you could see over Wolgan Falls in an exhilarating birds eye view. Across from us, there were some near impossible-looking jutting heads of stone, and some scarred white and orange faces of newly exposed rock. The view was a visual reminder of the danger of falling rock in that area. Falling trees, too seemed to be a problem there. Many apparently freshly cracked off massive termite eaten limbs were piled all down the slope. Looking up, you could see exposed stark yellow-orange spikes of wood contrasting the smooth gum eucalypt bark where limbs had cracked off.

Along the cliff top, I was impressed by the vivid colours of the fertile Wolgan valley below. Climbing the shelves, I thought fondly of lemurs in Madagascar on those big rock spires. I wish I had their incredible strength and agility to bound and fly from rock to rock like they do. It felt a bit anticlimactic, as it often does, on the final fire trail bash along the ridge back to the car. It took us a couple of hours to get back to the car. We arrived back just as it was too dark to walk without a torch.

Camp that night was quite something, and so too was what we saw the following day. However, that story will be continued in the next edition, so stay tuned! ♦



THE GREAT SOUTH WEST WALK

Julie Cox
Watagan Wanderers

Wind turbines on the South coast.
Photo: Julie Cox



The Great South West Walk (GSWW) is a 250 km loop beginning and ending in Portland, Victoria, and stretching out to the west from there. The first few days (about 60 km) takes walkers through the Cobboboonee State Forest and National Park where there is a choice of 4 camp sites. The next day is 21 km long, and walkers reach the Lower Glenelg National Park. The walk then follows the Glenelg River for approx 54 km. There are 5 walker camp sites along this stretch of river and many car, caravan, and canoeist camp sites. After reaching the town of Nelson on the coast, the walk follows the coast line back along beaches and capes to Portland, with

sufficient for that. I recommend purchasing the GSWW & Lower Glenelg map. This map is excellent although the road signs can be a bit confusing. [We found the track itself to be well-marked. RNC] The forest route meanders past swamps, Stringy Bark and Manna Gums and we passed by Reg's sink hole.

Day 2.

We walked from Crayfish Bay (south of Portland) almost to Cape Nelson. We walked past wind turbines, a feature called Yellow Rock & through The Enchanted Forest and had wonderful views all day.

Day 3.

Cape Bridgewater was today's walk, beginning at Fisherman Cove. We passed 2 seal colonies, although only 2 seals were visible on the day at this time of year. Again we were blessed with fine although chilly weather and excellent views. The Petrified Forest was a highlight of the day, along with the unusual landscape. After 19 km we reached Bridgewater Lakes: an interesting place with remarkable caves.

Day 4.

Today we moved to the Lower Glenelg NP. We had pre-booked camp sites at Pritchards caravan and car camp. Five of us were



Glenelg River from the GSWW.
Photo: Roger Caffin

tenting it for the 2 nights, while the others had their vans. I drove out to look at what is called The Inkpot, a natural depression, 10 metres deep and the colour caused by decaying vegetation. Two of the group wanted to walk the 9 km back to camp from a spot along the river. Others were taking their time to look further around Portland before meeting us at the camp site.

Day 5.

Six walkers walked along the river to the Battersby walker camp and back. A great day with Gang Gangs and Yellow Tail Glossy Blacks, kangaroos and wallabies, and beautiful views of the river. We checked out two canoeist camp sites for future reference. Returning to camp we heard that the 3 people who had remained in camp had an interesting day freeing a small kangaroo in a bad way from fishing line which was tangled around his hind legs (and had been for a long time). Unfortunately the poor thing was found dead the next morning. We had a great camp fire that evening with Alan playing the fiddle and Laura playing the Irish whistle, while we cooked potatoes in the fire.



The Petrified Forest. Photo: Roger Caffin

about 8 walker camp sites along the remaining ~130 km. The return distance depends on the route is chosen, as there is an inland option.

I decided on an easier option, as I could see the area as a series of car shuttles and day walks. My car of 3 Watagan Wanderers drove to Portland via the Great Ocean Road, where we met up with others to form a group of nine at the Portland caravan park. Two couples were in vans, and the other 5 of us in comfortable cabins for 4 nights.

Day 1.

Our first walk was in the Cobboboonee Forest. We had a bit of confusion setting up the car shuttle, as the map I had was not



The Nelson General Store and Post Office. We had posted our food parcel to here, but they had plenty of suitable foods there anyhow.
Photo: Roger Caffin



An artistic creation at a dune camp site,
using flotsam and jetsam.
Photo: Roger Caffin

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Day 6.

From the Glenelg Gorge car park we walked a 13 km section of the river gorge to Nelson. We were booked into a caravan park for 2 nights there. The walk was stunning. We saw emus and the gorge section was so different from our previous days. Tonight we enjoyed an excellent meal at the local pub.

Day 7.

For this day we had all decided to explore different things. Some were spending the day walking, some sightseeing. My 2

passengers and I went to Mount Gambier. On the way we visited Piccaninnie Ponds, a natural wonder. At Mt. Gambier we went to the Umpherston Sinkhole, the Englebrecht Cave, the Cave Gardens and the Blue Lake before visiting the Princess Margaret Rose Cave on the way back to Nelson.

That night happy hour was in the camp kitchen where we caught up on each others' day and wished each other safe travels home and elsewhere.

The walker camp sites we had seen on this trip were very good, as were the canoeist and car camp sites. The track was

in great condition and well maintained by "friends of the GSWW". This was an excellent way to get a taste of the GSWW without the heavy pack and every day was so different from the one before. Highly recommend visiting this area. ♦

[We found the multi-day walk back along the beach, using the camp sites hidden in the dunes, to be the most spectacular part of the route when we did the GSWW in 2005. I have taken the liberty of adding a few photos of the GSWW of my own. RNC]



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BONNUM PIC

Steve Deards
Sutherland Bushwalking Club



Morning tea on the edge of the escarpment

Wandering along the rocky slabs towards the end

Bonnum Pic is a rocky knob at the end of a narrow ridge in Nattai National Park. The views from its end are almost 360 degrees, with the main features being the Wollondilly River valley, Lake Burragorang, Mt Colong and Wanganderry Walls. The walk is wholly on the Hiltop 1:25,000 topographic map.

We started our walk at 9 am from the stockyards at the end of Wanganderry Rd. Wanganderry Road runs off Wombeyan Caves Road, about 24 km west of Mittagong in the Southern Highlands. The start of the walk followed a 4WD track downhill until the boundary of the

national park was reached. There, a foot track was found to the right which headed downhill and climbed up to a farm road, after crossing a couple of small creeks. The route was marked, but we had a little trouble following it due to a lot of fallen branches that had broken off trees because of the heavy snow falls a month or so earlier.

The farm road heads north and then west and this was followed until a foot track was found near its end. This is usually marked by a cairn. The route from here wound through forest until the western escarpment of the plateau was

reached. This section was very pretty with a lot of *Acacia terminalis* and *Boronia ledifolia* in flower. Large bushy Pomaderris shrubs were also in full flower and these enhanced the floral display. We had morning tea above the escarpment and admired the views.

We then continued north, following the foot pad until we reached an area of undulating rocky slabs. The pad mostly follows the edge of the escarpment and the slab areas are punctuated by patches of thick scrub. A lot of cairns have been placed here lately and these assisted navigation from one rocky area to the



The edge of the scarp gets a bit high



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next. Missing a cairn can lead you into thick scrub, so concentration is required to ensure progress towards the Pic is maintained at a reasonable rate.

After the slabs, the track became rougher and less distinct as it passed through overgrown scrub. Eventually, a small depression was reached and a rocky scramble was required to reach the top of the rise on the other side. A good view of the objective can be seen from here. It's not far away, but more scrambling is required and near the end, a hairy boulder section with some exposure was reached. A rope may be handy here, depending on which option is decided on – the high route or the low route. Both have some exposure.

From here, it was a short walk to the end. A visitors book is located on a ledge below and I recorded our details. I was surprised to find that this is the same book that I wrote in back in 2001 when I did my first walk here. It appears that the Pic is not visited often. Our return to the cars was back along the same route. We had been lucky with the weather, as rain had been forecast for that day. We reached the cars at 5 pm. ♦



Bonham Pic itself - hard to get to



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Book Reviews . . .

On Track Searching out the Bundian Way

John Blay
ISBN 9781742234441
Newsouth Books

This is the story of John Blay's search for the Bundian Way, an aboriginal path between Mt Kosciusko and Twofold Bay on the coast, near Eden. The 360 km path goes from high alpine country, through some pretty rugged intermediate zones, down at last to the coast.

This is not a guide book. That, or suitable maps, will come later when the mills of bureaucracy have finished grinding out their approval. I did suggest that John should just publish the maps and ignore the bureaucracy, following the path of the original Great North Walk authors. But he is the Bundian Way Project Officer for the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council, and he felt he couldn't. Fair enough.

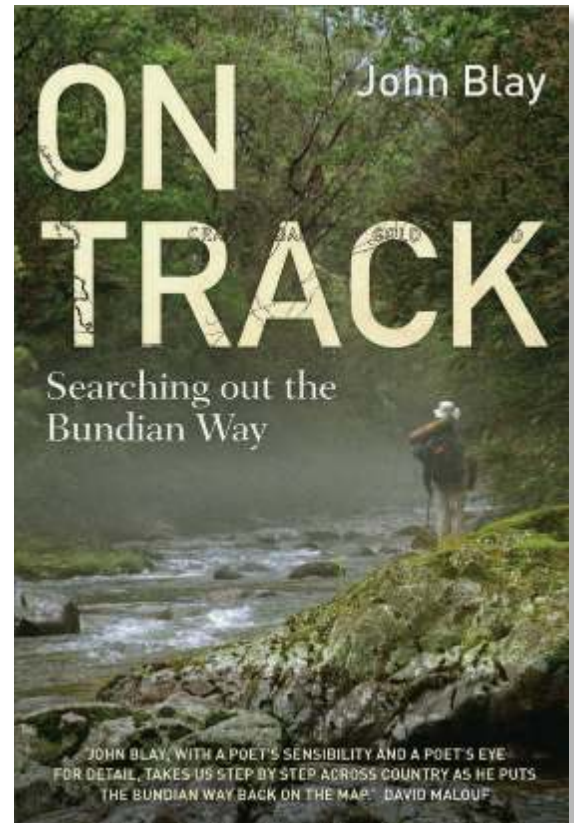
Rather, it is the story of John's search for this ancient path, and its about the country and the people he met along the way. Yes, he has

managed to trace out the whole thing. Needless to say, many aboriginal communities have been involved, as they are the only ones with any knowledge of this path, or trade route. And yes, it seems that there was active trading along the way: salt, flint and so on. And finally, yes, there will be an official route.

In this book John goes into a lot of the history of the area, of how (basically) the settlers moved in and took over. It seems that the locals were willing to share their territory at first, but that meant sharing the herds of cows and sheep as well. After all, if the cows and sheep displace all the native game, what is there to eat? Needless to say, that was not quite how the settlers saw things, and there was conflict. You can't help noticing John's opinion of some of this, and quite likely you may share a lot of it after reading the book. It is well written, and rather poetic.

320 pages, a few colour photos
RRP \$40, from
www.newsouthbooks.com.au

Roger Caffin



Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Last February my wife and I embarked on a camping / walking holiday in Gippsland Victoria. We were astounded at the camping fees being charged, being \$32 to \$35 for basic camp sites which had only long drop toilets, no showers, no fresh water and no garbage collection. I emailed National Parks Victoria and in May received a reply which reads as follows:

Following feedback from a number of people regarding the fees, there has been a recent change to camping fees. From 2 April 2015, camping fees for all basic campsites in Parks Victoria managed parks have been removed. Fees have been removed at over 500 basic camping sites over 70 campgrounds in 20 parks throughout regional Victoria. Bookings for these sites will remain in place until 30 June 2015 and from 1 July 2015, basic sites will not require a booking and will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

I think this information maybe of interest to our members.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Webb
Sutherland Bushwalking Club



30 of Willis's YEARS Walkabouts

After 30 years of remote walking tours, Russell Willis turns his gaze towards the future

Two anniversaries – the 55th year of publication of *The Bushwalker* and 30 years running bushwalking tours as Willis's Walkabouts. For me, this is even greater motivation to ensure 2016 is extra special.

For 30 years, I have been blessed in earning a living doing something I love. I visited many wonderful places and met many wonderful people. I have lived a life that many only dream about.

Unfortunately, the price for continuing to run this business has been an increasing amount of office work. I've had enough. It's time to concentrate on the things I truly enjoy rather than paperwork.

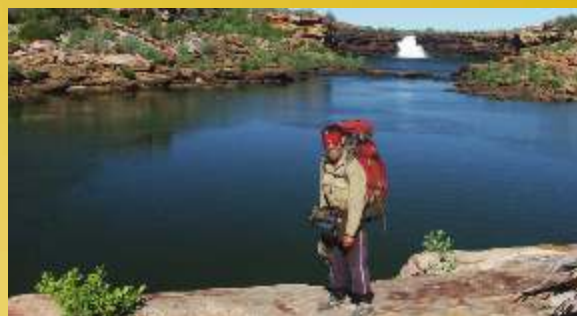
Times change and so must Willis's Walkabouts. To begin with, this will be the last print advert I run. As such, I'd like to say thanks to all *The Bushwalker* readers that have supported us along the way.

The next phase is to consider what next. To celebrate 30 years, I have created a list of the trips I most want to do and will focus on running these over the next few years. I welcome any expressions of interest from those who would like to join me. The best way to find out about those trips is to sign up for my free newsletter using the contact button on the website.

After that there's the matter of succession. While Willis's Walkabouts will definitely continue to exist, it will need to do so with far less of my involvement in the office work. I will, however, continue to lead walks for as long as I continue to enjoy it. And, of course, other walks will continue to be led by my small, select team of guides.

Yours,
Russell Willis

Russell Willis



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