

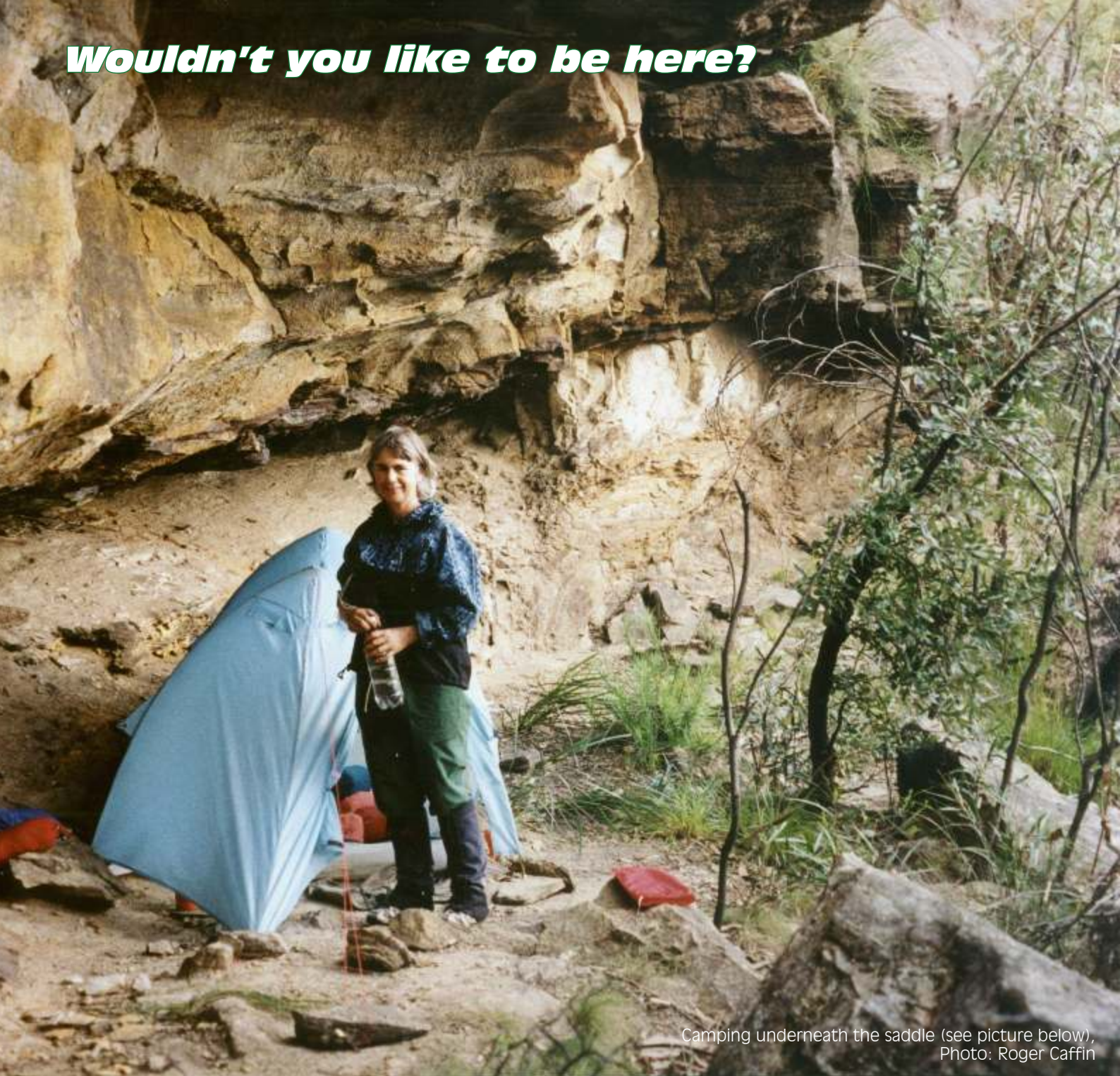
The **Bushwalker**



**Mt. Jagungal by Snowshoe,
Kosciusko National Park**

**Volume 40
Issue 3
Winter 2015**

Wouldn't you like to be here?



Camping underneath the saddle (see picture below),
Photo: Roger Caffin



Axeheads Range between Ruthless and Remorseless.
Photo: Roger Caffin

From the editor's desk. . .

Well, we nearly didn't have a Winter issue: a few weeks ago I had only one small article for it. But Margaret Covi of the Watagan Wanderers leant on her club members and came up with a whole lot of articles. So, if this issue seems to be a Watagan Wanderers special - well, it is. My thanks to Margaret and her club. But what about YOUR club?

The front cover is a hybrid between two of Margaret's articles: one on snow shoeing and another on a Jagungal trip. It is of course the summit of Mt Jagungal in winter, by snow shoe. The photo was taken late in July some years ago. The snow cover was a bit poor, as you can see.

The two inside front cover photos are both mine too - because I have run out of good photos from other people. If you have a good scenic or otherwise suitable photo, please send it to me! Otherwise ... you get my photos.

Anyhow, the inside front cover photos: the Axeheads Range (near Yerranderie) connects Ruthless to Remorseless via a very narrow rocky saddle - maybe 1 m wide in places, with a bit of a drop in the middle. That's the bottom photo. To be sure the saddle can be crossed, but we had this howling gale across it at the time, and discretion won. We dropped down on the near side (that was a bit steep) to traverse under the cliffs, and found the charming campsite in the top picture under the middle, with some spectacular views. The climb up the other side was a bit steep too.

The back cover photo was taken very early in the morning when we were descending from Dolice Refuge, under Mt Triglav in Slovenia. Limestone country, very different from Australia. The track is an old WW II military mule track built for access to the Refuge during the war. It is mostly quite OK, but looking down on the lower sections as they zigzag up the mountain face is a bit spectacular. Crossing the nevé bank seen in the photo was the only tricky bit: it was steep and icy.

Articles for Publication

We are always happy to receive pictures for publication, even if there is no story. Send them in! However, please note that little 640x480 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. Yes, printing on paper IS different from viewing on a screen.

Apart from that, PLEASE keep those bushwalking articles rolling in. We need them. No stories: no magazine. 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, that's fine but we won't use the DOC/PDF file itself or the photos embedded in them. They are not good enough.

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

Roger Caffin
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Bushwalking NSW Inc represents approximately 66 Clubs with a total membership of about 10,000 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 Administration

admin@bushwalkingnsw.org.au

for a list of Clubs, but a far more useful on-line list is available at the Bushwalking NSW website

www.bushwalkingnsw.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: Mt. Jagungal by Snowshoe (Australian Yowies), Kosciuszko National Park. Photo: Roger Caffin.

Back Cover: Descent from Dolice Refuge, Triglav National Park, Slovenia. Photo: Roger Caffin.

The Ultimate View and Ultimate Slot

Michael Keats, The Bush Club

Photos: Brian Fox

Terrifyingly steep stuff

This is a tale of a bushwalk laced with superlatives about some of the most spectacular features to be found anywhere on the planet. Some simple stuff first. It is just 3 hours from Sydney, in the Gardens of Stone National Park. You do not need ropes or tapes but you do need a good head for heights and an adventurous spirit.

Having created the walk concept from perusing the Glen Alice topographic map, it was discovered on a study of detailed aerial photographs that an ascent of

vertical cliffs of The Citadel (named by Haydn Washington September 1984) at the southernmost point of Genowlan Mountain would be beyond our rock scrambling skills, so we settled on attempting the ascent of a notched valley on the western side. It would still be a spectacular climb.

At 0908 the vehicles were parked in a layby on the Glen Davis Road. The briefing session focused on the challenges of the terrain and an understanding that the walk may be impossible to complete. Four minutes later we had crossed the road and commenced a zig zagging climb up the steep talus slope.

Some 20 m in we came across a well-defined path. It was not a bike track but very likely a safe walking access track running parallel to the Glen Davis Road used by the locals. It was noted and we kept climbing. As well as finding an unusual all blue variety of *Brachycome Daisy*, we were also treated to a mass flowering of *Correa reflexa* var *reflexa* that dominated the lower slope understorey.

By 0944 we had reached the first massive blocks of exposed sandstone.

Through the thinning forest views of the upper Capertee Valley could be seen. As we climbed a defined cliff edge was developing beneath us and at 0950, GR 247 308 we emerged onto a series of rock platforms with jaw dropping voids below. Col Ribeaux's property, Mount Airly, was a conspicuous green patch to the northwest. The high cliffs that encircle Col's place all the way to Airly Turret were magic in their brilliant colour. To the south Blackmans Crown squatted low on the horizon. After photos it was time to move, onwards and upwards.

A short slot climb and suddenly we were on an intermediate plateau and in a *Casuarina* forest. The dense mat of fallen needles prevented any understorey development so progress was rapid. Also in this area we came across a small section where a lightning strike had charred an area of about 100 square metres. At the centre were the remains of an exploded tree. All bark charring was on faces exposed to the blast. Heavy rain at the time must have reduced the impact of fire. The spur that extends from The Citadel in the south to Genowlan Trig I have named Citadel Spur.

At 1012 a convenient pagoda, GR 250 312 was chosen for morning tea. It was a

View from The Ultimate Point



Amphitheatre pass





Traversing above nothing - the next step is ... interesting

quick one as something in us all just wanted to climb and climb ... walking soon became a tactile experience. Contact with rock was everything. Seeking a way upward, the lower slopes of pagodas were used to make a convoluted progress. It is walker friendly terrain as we threaded our way around, and in and out, and always upward.

At 1030, GR 250 312 a broad slot became a pass, then a great pass that led

up to an amazing circular space, about 50 m across and surrounded on all sides by soaring pagodas, GR 251 313. The floor of this space was tufted with bright green grasses and occasional Xanthorrhoea. To the east light poured into this arena between the pagodas. The pass has been named Amphitheatre Pass by Brian Fox and the circular space the Pagoda Amphitheatre.

Drawn to the intense light between the pagodas in the east we made our way to the cliff edge, to one of the most stupendous outlooks in this amazing country. We gasped in awe when we walked out onto a narrow balcony. Below and stretching for kilometres was the Capertee Valley. The vision was an IMAX experience. In the north east were the profiles of Mounts Gundangaroo, and Canobla together with the guardian cliffs of Sir John's Mouth. Around to the south and east of this it was Red Rocks; the horizon blips of Mount Dawson, Mount Davidson, Mount Jamison, Mount McLean, then forward and south east it was the majesty of Pantoneys Crown. Much

closer and to the south was the block end of The Citadel followed by a continuity of imposing cliffs back to under our feet.

Immediately north was a natural masterpiece of two embayments backed by vertical cliffs. This was a reward for climbing of a scale like no other. We were entranced. Daryl climbed a precarious tilted boulder that perched on the cliff edge to the south. Possibly weighing 1000 tonnes this rock is connected to the cliff top by less than 10 square metres of



Genowlan Pagodas

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Looking down into The Ultimate Slot
The easy bit of the slot



contact. He took opportunity to say we also were perched on next to nothing. We retorted that his position was possibly worse. Cameras went into overdrive in this special area. It was Shelia who came up with the name, The Ultimate View. More than 20 minutes were enjoyed here.

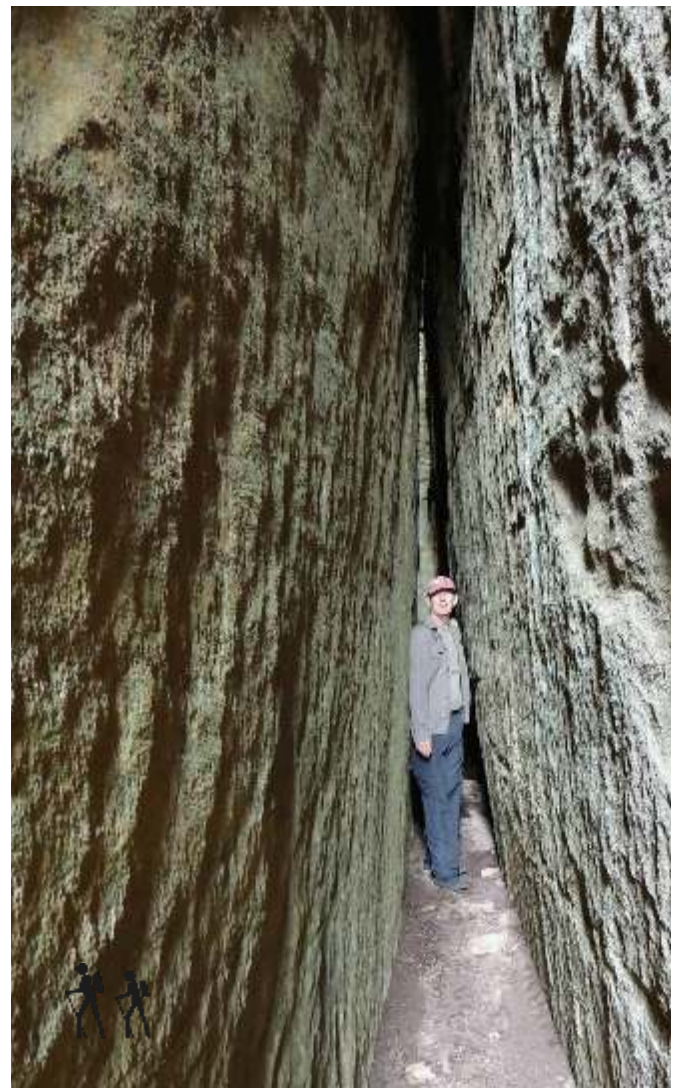
Four minutes after resuming we entered a great canyon to the north. Suddenly we were traversing the very narrowest of rock ledges with drops of 50 m below. The adrenalin rush was amazing. Deft foot work and a disciplined mind were required to cross over incised dry slots. A major canyon was negotiated using the same technique plus high level concentration. Photos taken of the drop do not fully reflect this 'on the edge' experience.

Several small short slots allowed the upward journey to continue through a sandstone wonderland. Then suddenly we had passed the exposed rocks, crossed a broad open rock platform, and entered a fire damaged forest in recovery mode. The appearance of cut tree stumps, abandoned cut logs, and level ground signalled we had arrived at Genowlan Trig, GR 253 316. Obligatory photos of us all clustered around and on top of the disused trig followed. It was now 1134 and there was a need to extend the adventure. To show off some of the wonders of the northern part of the mesa and the incised tributary network of Genowlan Creek we headed east along an extension of the old fire trail.

The views from an open platform here are amazing. Whilst Genowlan Mountain and Genowlan Point are dominant, the western cliff wall above Genowlan Creek was glowing burnt orange. Great pagodas occupied the vast space in between. Closest were the features of Hidden Valley then further north the wonders of Treasure Point. The Valley of the Dinosaurs was to our left, (west). Brian and I conferred about what to show the party. I pumped for a visit to Treasure Point through a maze of pagodas and deep ravines. Brian opted for something a little less rigorous, suggesting we go to the Grotto. As it turned out we did some entirely different.

We returned to the trig point and then made our way down the old trig access road to approximately GR 252 323. Here we

The slot getting narrower



stopped to appreciate the stunning formations and views. A cluster of great mammary shaped pagodas to the east of our position just had to be climbed and would provide a top spot for lunch. These pagodas, devoid of any vegetation are geomorphologic erotica. Walking on them is to caress them. Having lunch on the top of them is a sensual experience. And amazingly under one of three small solitary rocks in a valley between the two most delightful forms was a gecko. It was Lesueur's Velvet Gecko, *Oedura lesueurii*, sporting a newly grown tail.

As we were finishing lunch, Harold came up to me and said that there was a terrific deep ravine to the east of our position. I went and had a look at it. It sure looked a more exciting option than walk down an old access road, and it went in the direction we were planning to take. After discussion Brian agreed that it was worth exploring.

Minutes later we had descended the wonderful mammaries and were searching for an entry point to the ravine. To actually get in we needed to push back upstream about 50 m. Here a narrow slot terminating in a jump down let us into a well-defined ravine orientated north-south and of some size. It could possibly be a way of route down to the valley floor and connect with the road to The Grotto.

We pushed on down in this ravine that quickly narrowed to a slot and then started dropping rapidly. Chockstones appeared above us while the way forward kept narrowing. Soon it was packs off to negotiate a very tight section.

Some fancy footwork was then required to drop down even further. Brian, Peter and Emanuel suggested we should hold back while they tested options for further progress. Daryl, Sheila and I reversed out and went looking for other options. A side slot accessible via fallen tree enabled us to access the next ravine east. Daryl wandered up high for a view. I went down seeking a doable route. I thought I had found one in the event that we could not go down the slot.

Minutes later the advance party returned advising that the slot had a big drop and we could not descend it. They were equally adamant that the slot must be explored from the bottom if at all possible. I then volunteered my knowledge and we set off to test my findings.

The way down was via a mix of pagoda-like steps, a watercourse, some scrambling and then a few small jumps. No tape was required but the descent did have its moments. Once down below the major cliffs we started circling anticlockwise crossing several small gullies.

Finding the entrance to the gully that might provide access to the bottom of the slot was quite an exercise. The gullies in the area are densely forested and full of fern species that hide all kinds of fallen logs make checking difficult. Finally, there was a cry 'Found it'. What followed is one of the most incredible discoveries that any group of bushwalkers could hope to make.

The gully entry is nondescript. It could be any of a thousand similar looking gullies with absolutely no indication that there was anything other than a stock standard waterfall or less. This one is different. As the gully narrows the vegetation mix contains infinitely more rainforest species. Two towering tree ferns guard the entrance. At ground level an upturned moss and fern adorned stump is a de facto door. Resting across it is a partly collapsed, multi stemmed Sassafras, *Doryphora sassafras*. Beyond this mossy rocks and clumps of dark green Strap Water Fern, *Blechnum patersoni* surround a shallow pool. A few steps further on all vegetation ceases. An awesome narrow 45cm parallel sided cleft with a sandy floor leads on.

Packs are a hindrance here, so they were left outside. After about 7 m of narrow passage, and time for the eyes to adjust, we entered a slot that could be the entry to the underworld. This spot was less than 100 m from where we ate lunch. That is 100 m vertically above. The slot is a maximum 3 m wide, 55 m long and 80 m high. The walls are parallel all the way and the lateral displacement is constant. High above where light can enter, four chockstones are positioned at regular intervals. The back end wall of the slot is also near vertical. It was no wonder we could not descend. We spread out in the place and almost became lost from each other, it is so big. Brian Fox called this place The Ultimate Slot.

This is a place of total magic. Has it been visited before? We suspect not. We found no footprints just a pleasant silence. Our timing was good. While we were in the slot the sun was almost directly above. However it made small difference to the level of light at floor level.

After twenty minutes of numbing bliss we made ready to leave, still in disbelief. Ten minutes later we connected up with the road network. The Grotto visit was abandoned. After all, a visit to it would be such an anticlimax.

It took 40 minutes of steady walking to negotiate the road network to the top of the gap and then descend to Col Ribeaux's home. As a courtesy we knocked on the door and then spent a pleasant 15 minutes talking to Col. As we recounted our adventure he spoke of his one and only climb up Citadel



The entrance from the bottom

Inside at the bottom



Spur. He recalled the great difficulty in negotiating the pagodas. He reckoned we were heroes. The slot he had never been to and was unaware of its existence. He made the point that he has prowled around the area for 50 years and still does not know it all. ♦

Airly Packwalk

Margaret Covi,
Watagan Wanderers

View from Airly to Point Hatteras



DAY 1

An early start took us through Lithgow to start walking from the Airly Camping Area at 10 am. Years ago this was the site of a mining town of Airly. After passing a little stone cottage we walked uphill into the Mugi Murum Ban SCA which is adjacent to, & similar country to, the Gardens of Stone National Park, one of the areas that should be added to the park. A rough pad walked in by other walkers was found & it took us up to a cleared area where we could see others had camped at a hill with



Mining scoop

a communication tower.

Bags were left here & we walked down a track to a disused mine. This area has been extensively mined in the past for gold & diamonds. We saw an old mine entrance, a cable to pull out ore, & an old rake left behind, & views to Mt Airly.

After returning to our bags we went on along a miners' road passing other disused small mines. Also we went through the larger Mine in the Sky on a ridge top, where we saw mining dross, accommodation quarters & a large dam though not the mine entrance. We walked out along a

ridge to Point Hatteras with views north-east to the pointed Tayan Pic & Blacks Corner (an island mountain) & to Genowlan Pt.

We found our campsite, a cave with water nearby in Genowlan Creek, but the cave was too small to hold all of us. So, some made camp nearby on a cleared space off the road at an installation, which like others we found, must be to measure something. We wondered if it was perhaps a search for coal or gas.

DAY 2

Next morning we walked through a little canyon called "The Grotto", which we negotiated with the aid of ladders & rails & footpaths. It was pretty & easy to do. Without the ladders it would be necessary to abseil. Then we continued along the road to Genowlan Mountain & Genowlan Point, which is at the end of a long ridge with a spectacular rock escarpment. We passed a cave with aboriginal paintings of 3 boomerangs & 2 hands.

The end of this ridge was extremely interesting. At Genowlan Point there is the "Allocasuarina Nana" heathland, which unique in the whole world for its vegetation. It has dwarf heath species found nowhere else in the world, so it's a privilege to see it. We saw the banksia tree special to Genowlan Point.

Right at the end we entered an enclosure over a stile. Here, safely sheltered in wire cages to protect them from feral goats etc, is the Pultenea Point Genowlan, an endangered species of dwarf pea or "bacon & egg" flower (because of colouring). There are only about a dozen of these left in the world, all at this location. One was flowering, & we would be among probably only a few hundred people in the world that have ever seen it.

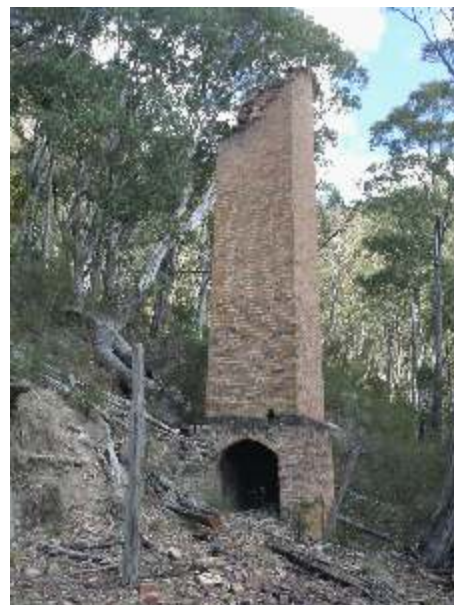
Lunch was eaten here with nice views to Mt Airly. On our way back we visited a large cave with a waterhole where our group had stayed last time, & we climbed up a slot to a ridge & some pagoda tops.

DAY 3

We packed up & headed back. We intended to walk through the canyon again to cut off some of the road & some hills. To our great surprise someone had been there after us & removed the ladders! This is a mystery we haven't solved.

We retreated & walked along the road, getting back to the cars by about 11 am. Then we continued along a road from the camp area along the eastern side of Mt Airly. Here once were shale mines & we saw the remains of this mining & homes of the workforce. Some remains of stone cottages were to be seen.

Outside one house people had carved into a rock. When graffiti is old enough it becomes historic inscriptions. Translation: people had carved their names & dates into the rock near their stone house. Remains were seen of cave houses. Many houses were built by miners using a big rock as part of the walls or roof.



Mine chimney



Remains of miners house

We followed the Tramway Trail, so named from the horse tramway that took slate to a cableway to the valley. Parts of the bed of this were seen in the bush off the newer track. We saw old chimneys & ventilation shafts & a steam boiler which drove the cableway. Wire cable was still to be seen that was once part of the cableway that took the slate that was mined down to the valley (near the old steam engine that drove the cableway).

It was a pleasant walk back to the cars through the green valley with views up to the escarpment of Point Hatteras to the Airly camping area, after which we left about 3.30 pm for home. ♦



The Grotto

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Walk Safely—Walk with a Club

Ten Wanderers met in the Paddy Pallin store at the caravan park at Jindabyne, where we were to stay till the following Saturday. Here snow shoes were hired for those who didn't have them, and we were ready for a great week.

Snow shoes are platforms that strap under walking boots. They have metal crampon teeth underneath that grip on snow and ice. Most brands are made from aluminium tubing and a tough fabric, but the Australian Yowies shown here are all plastic.

Day 1. Perisher to Porcupine Rocks and Mt Wheatly

Christine Harvey

Four new snowshoers strapped on snowshoes for the first time today after a quick lesson from Bob and off we went, heading uphill out of Perisher. It was a beautiful clear day with some high cloud although rather windy with a decent snow



A fine spot for morning tea

covering for our first day of snowshoeing. It was easier than I was expecting as long as I didn't try to step backwards!

Morning tea was taken beside a lovely granite outcrop and beautiful snow gums. This is where I learnt to get up and down and also how to sit comfortably with these snowshoes on. Not too difficult but not at all elegant! On to Porcupine Rocks through patchy snow and a beautiful view of the Thredbo River Valley. Ruth had a



Porcupine Rocks

Snow Shoeing

A cooperative write by
Watagan Wanderers

Photos: Margaret Covi
and Roger Caffin

go at climbing over the boulders with her snowshoes on although had to be coaxed down again as she seemed to get stuck.

From there we headed over towards Mt Wheatley as the wind picked up and the temperature dropped. We had lunch sheltered behind granite boulders out of the wind on the plain before climbing towards Mt Wheatley then downhill to Perisher Pass where we enjoyed watching the skiers on our way back to the carpark. First day: very successful and I looked forward to the next.

In fact each day was fantastic. Every day was different both in where we went and the weather conditions. I never expected to go cross country to the top of Kosciuszko in winter then end up in a whiteout following the person in front's boots with great concentration. Nor did I expect to be in a blizzard up at Blue Cow or climb the icy wind swept South Ramshead and walking in soft powder so pristine it was magical both as the snow fell and in the sunshine. The animal footprints in the snow, the icicles hanging from dead trees covered in lichen and the beautiful colours of the heath and trees made each day just wonderful. I was usually the last one to arrive or leave as getting the gloves on and off quickly to take photos seemed to take me ages and I thank everyone for their patience. It was such a great experience in I look forward to the next time.

DAY 2. Guthega - Snowy River valley

Ruth Campbell

Day 2 and still a novice. A bleak weather forecast sent us to the relatively sheltered Guthega valley, where we strapped on our "rabbit traps" in light sleet. After crossing the bridge over a tributary creek (the original crossing consisted of cables which were pulled across while one clung on like a monkey!) we headed uphill and then along the valley side, with the Snowy River rushing along far below.

Then hallelujah, the sun broke through and we were treated to magnificent views of distant peaks, whilst the snow covered Snow Gums glistened and their multi-coloured bark was accentuated, and the Snowy River sparkled below. Illawong Hut was our destination, a private ski hut which we attempted to shelter against as snow began to gently fall. Some WWs dropped down to the bridge over the Snowy River, where John performed acrobatics on the cable support.

There were several cross-country skiers staying at the hut; they slogged it up the the far side valley for a brief downhill



Crampon teeth
Under Yowie
Snow shoes.
Photo: Yowie



Burnt gums near Guthega Dam

"whoosh". We were kindly invited inside the Hut for a cuppa but of course we graciously declined and prepared to make our return in the increasingly heavier snowfall (after John had found a deep hole behind the Hut to drop into).

The original plan to climb up to the ridge top and return up high had to be abandoned as the wind was too strong up there, and the weather was closing in. It was very beautiful watching the snowflakes settling over foliage. My steaming-up glasses eventually froze over, and I had plenty of practice "rolling onto knees" and clumsily getting upright again on the rabbit traps after slipping downhill and crashing in a heap.

We were very pleased to catch sight of that first bridge again through the trees, and hurried uphill to the cars which were heavily blanketed in snow. At least 20 cm of snow fell before next morning.

DAY 3. Blue Cow

Margaret Covi

We drove to the Ski Tube station on the Thredbo road. We changed trains at Perisher & continued to the top station, Blue Cow. The map shows us that this is actually at Mt Blue Calf with Mt Blue Cow being further on. We walked outside to be surprised at a blizzard, or it seemed like that, with freezing wind & snow falling.

However having come up, we had to venture on, so we headed into a valley which gave us shelter from the wind &

soon the snowfall stopped too. We walked around the valley & thought how pretty it was with recent snowfall on the bushes & rocks. Then we headed across to the top of a nearby hill. The wind had somewhat abated now & we had lunch comfortably just under the top of the hill.

After lunch we followed the ridge up to the top of Mt Blue Cow where there was a trig point. We admired the view & returned across the valley to the ski tube station & after an apres-ski cup of coffee, took the train back down.

DAY 4. MT KOSCIUSKO

John Hagen

It's day 4 of our winter week. The conditions look favourable to make the trip to Mt Kosciuszko. The first timers might have felt out of their comfort zone, but when we reached the top of the ski



The summit, Mt Kosciuszko

lift, the smiles on peoples' faces said it all. It was glorious, little wind and the sun was out.

Great conditions all the way to morning tea. As we were approaching the top, the clouds were building up, but we all reached the top and had spectacular views.

Soon after the photography was done, we went down to Rawson Pass to get shelter from the wind and cold to have our lunch. It was just too bitter up there to take the gloves off. There normally are

toilets here, but they were either removed or fully snowed over.

[The old Porta-Loo toilets are gone, and have been replaced by the NPWS with some underground toilets which do look fairly couth. They are essential, given the thousands of tourists you get up there every day in summer. However, come winter, they tend to get a bit buried ... - Ed]

As we are having lunch, you could see the clouds rolling in. By the time we started to head back, it became whiteout conditions. Lucky we were able to follow tracks back, saving having to navigate with map and compass only. What a day it was, just magical with plenty of lovely fresh snow and we got back in time before the lift closed.

Day 5. Ramsheads

Trevor and Jenny Henderson

This was our last day in the snow and it turned out a really good walk. Leaving the car at Dead Horse Gap, we headed straight up towards the Ramshead trig. The going was steep at first with plenty of exposed boulders and snow gums to dodge. After about a kilometre it flattened becoming more open. We passed a camp where there were three tents and a pit in the snow where the campers had their campfire.

After morning tea behind a group of boulders, we continued up towards the trig on the summit which we reached at about midday. The weather during the day was variable from bright and sunny to bitterly cold winds and close to white-out conditions. The views from the top were amazing, to the south out towards Cascade Creek, while back along the Main Range the snow covered rock formations made for some great photographs.

We had lunch in a sheltered area just below the summit. Our return route followed our tracks up. On the

way back we meet with the aforementioned campers. It turned out they were part of a commercial expedition. Strange as it may seem to bushwalkers, there are people prepared to pay big money for someone to lead them to a campsite less than a kilometre from a road. Our first snow shoeing trip was excellent and we will certainly be back next year. ♦



Ramshead Trig



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JAGUNGAL WILDERNESS



NW face of Mt Jagungal

Only a small group were available for the Jagungal Wilderness (Kosciusko NP) packwalk. We drove down to the area on the 4th January and organised a car shuttle, leaving one car at Round Mountain carpark then driving back to Three Mile Dam where we camped overnight. The next morning we drove across the road to the Mount Selwyn Ski area where we left the second car in the overflow car park. *[At this time of the year, Mt Selwyn is DEAD - Ed]*

We found a sign pointing to the Tabletop Trail, so we followed that for a couple of km until we hit the Tabletop Trail which the Australian Alps Walking Track follows. We were keen to have a look at Four Mile Hut but missed the track leading off to it. Probably talking too much to notice! *[It is not obvious - Ed]*

We stopped for morning tea and met three other bushwalkers who told us the hut was further back, so we continued on. The Kiandra gold rush was in this area and there are remains of old gold diggings near Nine Mile Creek. We took the next sidetrack - the Four Mile Hill Trail to Broken Dam Hut, where we decided to spend the night. During the afternoon we walked further along the track to Tabletop Mountain which we climbed for excellent 360 degree views of the surrounding



O'Keefes Hut in Dec 2004, after the fires

country including Jagungal in the distance. Back at the hut we walked down to the dam which had been used to gather water for a race for the gold diggings. The hut had been burnt down in bushfires and was rebuilt a few years ago and was in excellent condition. As there was an approaching thunderstorm we decided to sleep in the hut.



Mt Jagungal summit in bad weather. The cairn was sheathed in ice

The next day we rejoined the Tabletop Trail which wound around past Tabletop Mountain and continued on to meet up with the Boltons Hill Trail. Three hundred metres past the junction we had to leave the trail to head south through the bush to reach Happys Hut. We found ourselves in thick alpine scrub, so when we noticed a grassy clearing near a side creek we headed to the creek. This was not a very good idea and it was soon hard going along the creek. *[Sub-alpine scrub: Ho Ho Ho - Ed]* Eventually we reached the bottom of the hill and found Happys Hut where we had morning tea.

After morning tea we headed across Happy Jacks Plain but it was difficult walking as the ground was very tussocky and there were a lot of watercourses to

Graeme Mee
Watagan Wanderers
Photos: Roger Caffin

cross. Soon it began to rain and we were getting wet as we crossed a scrubby knoll. We soon saw the transmission lines in the distance which indicated we were almost at the Grey Mare Trail. However the thunder and lightning increased and developed into torrential rain and hail. Although we were now on the Grey Mare Trail it was difficult going in the heavy rain, crossing creeks and watercourses, and we were soon saturated and started to get cold. We passed another bushwalker but the conditions were not really conducive for a chat.

The thunderstorm lasted for almost three hours but we kept plodding on and eventually reached Mackeys Hut where we sought shelter for the night, exhausted after a long hard day. With the weather conditions we were experiencing we really appreciated the shelter provided by the mountain huts which are maintained by the Kosciusko Huts Association and NPWS.

After a good night's sleep we headed back along Grey Mare Trail. The original plan was to leave the trail at Diggers Creek and head off-track south along the Munyang Range and Great Divide towards Cesjacks Hut and Mawson Hut. However we could see more threatening thunderstorms in the sky and did not want to be caught off-track in another storm so we continued along the trail to reach O'Keefes Hut for morning tea.

We found this to be an amazing hut with a dining table and chairs and old newspapers stuck on the walls. Another hour and a half walk brought us to the Tumut river where we had lunch. *[O'Keefes Hut was totally destroyed in the 2003 fires, and was rebuilt with help from the O'Keefe family - Ed]*

Towering above us was Jagungal, a magnificent stand-alone two thousand metre high mountain, that looks like a sleeping lion. At the Tumut crossing we found a cairn and a track which led up hill to the long southern ridge of Jagungal. This continued through snow gums and mountain daisies to top of the



Inside Mackeys Hut drying out after a storm

mountain. From the top we had magnificent views down to the Main Range in the south, Tabletop Mountain in the north and Round Mountain to the west. We also had phone reception and were able to ring our spouses.

After descending from the mountain we looked back up to the summit which was now covered in thick black cloud, so we took the Round Mountain Trail to Derschkos Hut for shelter for the night.

When we arrived at the small hut built by the Snowy Mountains Commission we found it was full of people with two young families with children and another couple already there. There was also another group camping behind the hill. Some managed to find space in the hut and I set up my tent outside.

One of the ladies in the hut had met a ranger during the day who had said there was a major rain event approaching and they were expecting 100 mm of rain, so the advice was 'to get off the mountain'. So in the morning everyone packed and headed for the car park at Round Mountain. We made very good time and were back at the car by noon which enabled us to drive home in the afternoon. ♦



The interior of the restored O'Keefes Hut, furnished and lined with newspapers from a previous era



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Elyl Peak to Baerami Ck

Trevor & Jenny Henderson

Watagan Wanderers

Photos: Bob Cox

The main objective of our walk was to climb Elyl Peak (601 855, Mt Pomany), a 859 m basalt peak atop the sandstone country between Widden and Baerami Creeks in the Wollemi National Park. Our party of seven walkers met at Jerrys Plains and then drove in convoy to the National Parks picnic / camping area at the Baerami Creek oil shale mines ruins.

The ruins are the remains of an ill-fated shale oil mining and refining operation from the late 1940s. The retort is quite small and appears to have been only a pilot plant. The mines were small having been dug to test the extent of the shale resource. The equipment was technically flawed and the retort failed soon after commissioning. In addition the shale oil could not compete against imported petroleum products.

After inspecting the ruins we set off along the Baerami Creek fire trail for about three and a half km, stopping for lunch at the junction of the western and eastern arms of Reubens Creek. We left the track after lunch and continued along the eastern arm of the creek for about two and half km, making camp on a grassy / stinging nettle flat near Reubens Knob. It rained during the night.

Saturday morning the rain had cleared and we were up and away by 7:30 am. Our route took us along the ridge system to the east of Reubens Creek towards our objective. Although there were significant cliff lines there were sufficient breaks in the rock that we were able to reach the top without too much difficulty. As we reached the base of Elyl Peak, the vegetation became more open and grassy due to the basalt soils. The actual peak is quite a sharp pimple with a small stone cairn on top. A great place for lunch with filtered views across into the Widden Valley and Blackwater Creek.

Our route back to camp followed the obvious ridge at the very head of Reubens Gully. Despite the friendly contour lines



On a spur line coming down from Elyl Peak

Walk Safely—Walk with a Club



On the way up to Elyl Peak, looking back to camp, Reubens Knob on right

[Ho ho ho - Ed] on the map the first cliff line we encountered was quite substantial, but there was a break on the LHS side and we reached the creek without too much difficulty.

The last three km along the creek were slow, whilst there were no major obstacles such a waterfalls we were all pretty tired so it was relief to reach our camp just before 5



Reubens Creek near the camp site

pm and most importantly in time for Frank to cook dinner before darkness descended.

The walk out was a less strenuous affair. We headed east through Allegro Crater (named on the 1971 Mt Pomany map but not included on more recent editions). The crater is an interesting flat basin surrounded by cliffs. From the eastern side

of the crater we followed a rocky ridge down into the grazing land at the head for Baerami Creek and eventually a track back to the shale ruins.

Our GPS was running for the entire walk and collected the following statistics:

Total Distance 31.5 km,
Moving Time 9h 43m,
Average Speed 3.2km/h.
Total Ascent 1221 m,
Total Descent 1190 m.

♦

Lords Creek

Julie Cox
Watagan Wanderers

I put this creek on our Walks program many years ago as a walk, and quite a few people showed up. Unfortunately we'd only gone about 50 m into the scrub when we were stopped by a huge waterfall with no way around. That day became a clifftop walk, and Lords Creek in the Watagans became a bee in my bonnet.

Finally, I got around to (or plucked up the courage) to put it on as an abseiling day. We left one car on Redbank Rd near The Gap at Freemans Waterhole and the other cars at The Gap itself. Then we climbed 'The Great North Walk' track to the Heaton tower, where Lords Creek originates. After going for about 100 m into the bush and finding no great cliff line, it looked as though we'd be robbed of our abseil. However, after realising there were actually 2 small headwaters leading into the main creek, we came upon the jaw-dropping cliff line of 70 m. After much searching around for a suitable place to 'go over the edge' Alan

tied up and peeked over. "I see a bottom". Great news! Don't like to go over if you can't be sure that the rope will reach the bottom!

We threw the ropes over [*one assumes just the free end! - Ed*], it was very heartening to hear a solid THUNK! when they hit the bottom. Mind you, anything after this drop could be a big question mark.

We abseiled down one of the best waterfalls in the Watagans. After that the creek continued down and down, steeply and more steeply, but there were no more abseils. We ended up calling this "The Never Ending Creek" as it went on and on, even though its only 1 km on the map. Finally we reached Redbank Rd and drove to the Gap and the other cars for afternoon tea. We had heaps of leeches and bites, we were tired and scratched, Margaret and I tossed our trousers in the bin, but it was a great day. As are all Watagan walks. ♦



The big abseil - hope there are no more!



COMING EVENTS

10/11 October- 24 hour, Capertee NP

22 November - 6 hour, Lake Macquarie

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Book Reviews . . .

Following Burke and Wills across Australia

Dave Phoenix
CSIRO Publishing
ISBN 978-1-486-30158-4
\$49.95

Exactly why this book was published by CSIRO - a science research organisation, I am not sure. Never mind, it is a very nicely done book, 416 pages, lots of colour photos, and adequate maps for a planning exercise for a 4WD trip. Some of the photos are modern, but lots of them are reproductions of very old drawings and sketches. The latter are quite interesting, and not something I would ever have seen otherwise.

Of course, every 'knows' about Burke and Wills, but as I read the book I realised that my 'knowledge' or beliefs about their expedition was mainly a long off the mark. Their comments about the country and the Aboriginals they met were fascinating. Their comments about the logistics organised for the trip were - well,

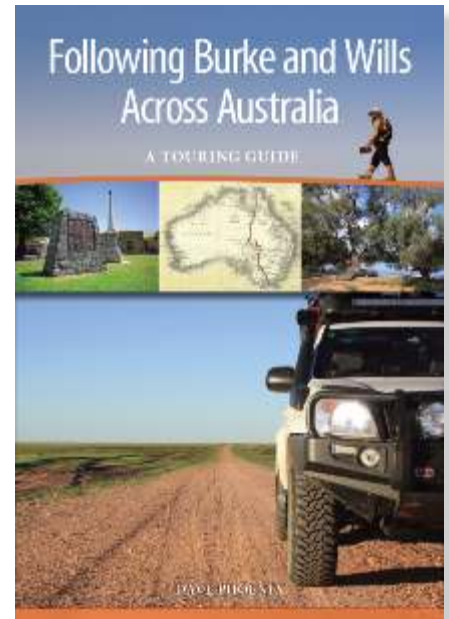
entertaining is one description. Much of my amusement is due to a far greater knowledge of what travelling through the Australian bush requires - and does NOT require, than they had in those days.

The level of detail in the book about every stage of their expedition is excellent. Obviously an awful lot of time and effort has been spent to make this book *the* complete word on the expedition. Quite fascinating stuff.

They did get to the Gulf of Carpentaria and were on their way back when things went wrong. Exactly what went wrong - well, it is hard to say, but basically it seems they (men and camels) ran out of food and water. And they pushed themselves too hard in the hope that things would work out. That seems strange in some ways, but the book does cover the diary entries they were making right to the end.

Did you know that while Burke and Wills both died, a third man, King, survived? I didn't.

Roger Caffin



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The Bush Club 75 Years and still walking

ISBN 978-0-646-93351-1

This small-format 170 page celebration book is remarkable. It covers walks done by Bush Club members in nine countries plus most States in Australia - with gorgeous colour photos from each trip. It was created as a celebration of the Bush club turning 75 years old. Quite seriously, I actually read right the way through every trip report.

Two of the usual suspects were involved of course: Micheal Keats was one of the five Editors who put this book together, and Barry Hanlon did the layout. Barry does many of the Gardens of

Stone books and also does the layout for this magazine. You can buy this book (details below), but the original purpose was to provide a free copy to every Bush Club member. No maps or route details, just a description of the fun they had.

To be sure, every picture is excellent, but the one which most amused me was of a whole row of Bush Club members on camels, trekking across the Sahara Desert in Morocco. Yeah, really! The photo of Mutawintji NP in NSW was pretty impressive too. Oh, and the photo of ... they were all good.

\$10.00 per copy plus postage and handling of \$2.00 per copy, available from Micheal Keats,
mjmkeats@easy.com.au

Roger Caffin



Descent from Dolice Refuge,
Triglav National Park, Slovenia.
Photo: Roger Caffin.