

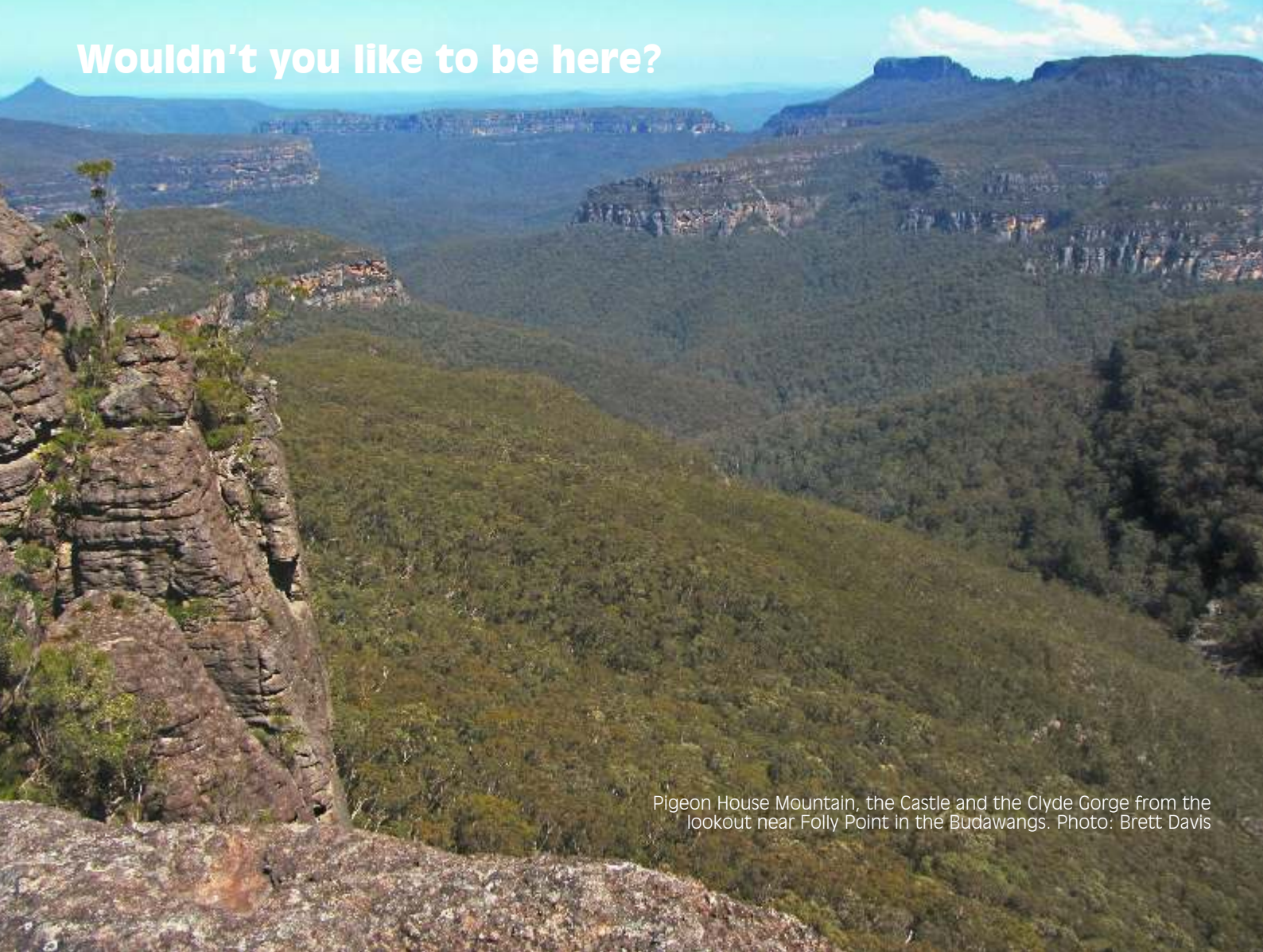
The Bushwalker



Boggy Plains in April,
Dead Horse Gap, Kosciusko NP

Volume 40
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Wouldn't you like to be here?



Pigeon House Mountain, the Castle and the Clyde Gorge from the lookout near Folly Point in the Budawang. Photo: Brett Davis



Looking up the Colo River from the Canoe Creek junction, Wollemi NP. Photo: Julie Cox

From the editor's desk. . .

We were doing the Australian Alpine Walking Track some years ago, from Walhalla to Canberra, and as we came up to the Cobberas FT it started to snow. Ah well, it wasn't too bad, just a bit unexpected for April. The view of the Ramsheads as we dropped down onto Boggy Plains (near Dead Horse Gap) was rather good, with that dusting. Of course the snow didn't last very long, and we had good weather to the other side of Mt Jagungal. But the next day after that we woke up to a very quiet and rather dim morning - it had snowed again and the tent was covered. All of which goes to show you need to be just a little careful in our alpine regions. But it was a good trip.

I see it is 2015: just where did the last few years go? Sigh.

Articles for Publication

We are always happy to receive pictures for the Inside Front Cover - and elsewhere too. If you would like to see yours published, 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.

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, that's fine but we don't use them.

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.

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
Editor



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Front Cover: Boggy Plains in April, Dead Horse Gap, Kosciuszko NP. Photo: Roger Caffin.

Back Cover: Mount Banks, seen from the track between Baltzer Lookout and Hanging Rock. Photo: Sue Stuckey, Hill View Bushwalkers.



Furry camels—See story on page 14. Photo: Paul Bateman



Roping the rafts through some boulders

Capertee/Colo Rivers

Friday, midday

Six keen packrafters with two support team members (along for a backpack and to bring cars home) headed to Newnes on the Wolgan River to camp near the historic Newnes Hotel. Our intention was to walk the Wolgan Trail to the Rocky Creek junction early on Saturday.

We arrived just on dark and our host Thomas Ebersoll, owner of Newnes Hotel & Cabins had preheated his woodfired pizza oven. Camp was set up and we settled in for a wonderful team dinner.

Discussions were had with Thomas (Newnes' only permanent human resident: wombats outnumber him) regarding our concerns about low water levels. Thomas made a phone call to a friend in Glen Davis to check. His advice was to go to plan B and start our adventure from Glen Davis on the Capertee River. The Capertee and Wolgan Rivers come together deep in the Wollemi Wilderness to form the Colo.

During our trip questions were asked about the river name changes and why the Colo didn't flow full length with one name. My summation is as follows. The area is very rugged, and the Colo was first accessed from the Hawksbury soon after European settlement, with the narrow river flats of the lower 30 km cleared for agriculture. Upstream the Colo was too rugged and narrow, closing into a deep gorge. The upper Wolgan and Capertee Valleys were cleared for grazing soon after the Blue Mountains were first traversed, but the way the gorges closed in prevented any clearing or agriculture downstream. The middle 100 km of rugged wilderness and deep sandstone gorge country were a bit unknown. Names were bestowed upon each river before anyone realised they were a common drainage system; these names were retained later on. The Hawksbury and Nepean rivers were explored and named in much the same way: the Hawksbury from the sea and the Nepean overland. Later on, when they were found to be the same river, the names were still retained: Hawksbury for the lower tidal section and Nepean for the upper catchment.

Both Newnes (from 1907) and Glen Davis (from 1938) townships have an industrial history. Both had had relatively large scale oil shale and coal mining histories with associated oil, kerosene and paraffin producing works.

The only reliable water gauge, Upper Colo, 100 km downstream was reading 0.7 m; our ideal level was 1.0 m. With Newnes being 550 m above sea level and Glen Davis at less than 300 m, starting at Glen Davis hopefully meant less rock blockages and raft portages. So the decision was taken to drive to Glen Davis early next morning, 9 km as the crow flies and 99 km by road.

Saturday morning

A chilly start as we departed south through the spectacular Wolgan Valley, to Lidsdale then NW along the Castlereagh Hwy to Capertee village then 35 km east into the equally beautiful Capertee Valley to Glen Davis. 5 km further east, in Wollemi National Park at Coorongooba campground, we culled excess weight from our packs, pumped up our rafts and donned our packs, anticipating lots of walking and raft lugging ahead.

The Capertee appeared to have less water than the Wolgan though more water flowed into it from Coorongooba Creek than the Capertee was carrying to that point. Malcolm and Geoff walked along the river bank with Robyn, who thought that was a smarter choice as there was not much water in the river. Soon, and unexpectedly, we were able to paddle a series of long deep pools separated by large boulder blockages which required portage.

After about 2 hr we set our first wilderness camp close to the junction with Freshwater Creek. Around a nice campfire we cooked a meal together and shared stories of Dorothy's drive from London to Mongolia, completed just weeks earlier, and Greg's paddling Tasmania's Franklin River during the 1980's anti-dam protests and more.

Sunday we farewelled Malcolm and Geoff early, as they walked back to the cars to bring them home for us. With cliff

lines 400+ m above us, six keen packrafters forged ahead along the Capertee, trudging through sand and shallow water dragging or carrying our rafts. We paddled the deeper pools and portaged numerous rock blocks and rapids. On the way we encountered a red-bellied black snake crossing the river, numerous eastern water dragons, an osprey, a kangaroo, many birds and evidence of other species.

Camp was set up on the south side of the river next to a nice productive fishing hole, with two bass landed in the twilight. "Big Dog" was explained to our group of weary rafters as with aching muscles we were all in bed well before 7:30 pm.

Monday

Three more bass were landed before sunrise with the larger two cooked up nicely in a bed of embers for breakfast. By 8.30 am we were again trudging the sand, dreading the regular quicksand and boulder portages.

Mid morning we spotted a dingo pup on a sandflat, ironically near Dingo Creek.

Each day the magnificent gorge became narrower and more spectacular.

We pulled up short of our goal, camping on a sandbank downstream of Dingo Creek.

Tuesday

We camped on a sandbank downstream of Gaspers Creek, about 2km short of the Capertee/Wolgan/Colo junction. Fish jumped onto the lures in adjoining deep pools, with two hooked from the first two lures cast.

Wednesday

At 11 am we jubilantly reached the junction, with the Wolgan flowing in from our right and carrying twice the water of the Capertee. After taking almost 4 days to traverse less than 25 km we settled in, agreeing we had earned a break.

Excited at the prospect of more paddling and slightly easier going, we snapped team photos and thoroughly enjoyed the moment at a place very few people have visited.

We camped at a great spot, though it had no fishing/swimming hole, opposite Girribung Creek with its towering Blue Gums.

Thursday

(At this beautiful and remote campsite we left a Geo Cache. A small black plastic canister with bright yellow lid, tucked into a crack in the rockface at camp, hopefully above any future flood levels. It contains a note with our trip details, Newcastle

A large boulder pile-up on the Capertee

Glen Davis to Canoe Creek 56 km / 8 days

Col McCluskey Newcastle Ramblers

Packrafting Adventure

Ramble
rs Bushwalking
Club group names and
a mystery item. A challenge for
other Ramblers/walkers/packrafters to
visit.)

Today was to be a shorter day, though a long sand march. Fewer rockblocks were encountered but the quicksand was relentless. The gorge continued to narrow with fewer scree slope and the many river bends cutting straight into beautiful rock faces towering overhead. The going was still tough but the scenery was magnificent.

With everyone in the group bruised, battered and carrying many aches and pains, by the end of the day murmurs of a mutiny were surfacing. The leader was feeling the effects of continuous wet walking in a wetsuit, with what Greg diagnosed as a classic case of "crotch rot". Severe chaffing of the inner thighs and groin: painful, tender and unsightly!

Camp was at Wollemi Creek junction. We arrived early and everybody had a much earned nanna nap.

Around the campfire, discussions were had about leaving the gorge at Canoe Creek with Robyn, Bev and our support party. Consensus was reached to go home, lick our wounds and return another time with higher water levels to complete the lower reaches of the Colo. (Our leader had previously paddled from Canoe Creek to the Hawksbury in three separate stints, which made agreement easier).

Friday

Bev donated ointments and soft, polar-fleece lined wetsuit shorts to Col in an attempt to prevent further chaffing. These

measures saved further damage, and what with less walking and more paddling over the next days some improvement resulted.

A cool start, shaded by towering cliffs on our east. We firstly walked 2 km of shallow sandy bottom, observed a soaring wedge-tailed eagle. Soon we reached a long deep pool and enjoyed a perfect blue sky overhead with warming sunshine. We reached a large blockage with enormous boulders and a strenuous portage ensued. We continued paddling long deep pools and climbing/portaging numerous large boulder blockages, but had our best day with the most paddling time of of the trip.

We camped on a large sunny sandbank between Dooli and Pinchgut Creeks, catching five lovely bass in a nearby deep pool.



Saturday

Today a majestic sea eagle soared above us for a long while as we paddled slowly down the river, negotiating numerous rock blockage and mostly unpaddlable rapids.

Mid-afternoon, about 3 pm, we celebrated reaching Canoe Creek where

we were met by five cheerful Ramblers with cameras and congratulations.

We camped on the huge sandbank at Canoe Creek.

Sunday

A very hot day had been predicted. Early in the day some of our support crew walked a couple of km upstream to experience the gorge, swimming in a deep hole before returning to Canoe Creek where they found the wounded laying about on the shady riverside in rest and recovery mode.

Monday

With a hot day forecast we set out at 7 am for the steep walk out of the gorge at Canoe Creek. 11 of us happily climbed out, reaching the top of the steeper section before the heat set in. We encountered 3 very ambitious younger men walking in and planning a day walk to Tambo Crown and return, beyond what I would consider practical. A tough day indeed. [Not so - RNC]

We were at the cars by 10.30 am and looked forward to a shower and huge burgers at the Grey Gum Cafe back along the Putty Road. ♦



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An aerial photograph of Obelisk Hill and its surrounds taken in 2012, courtesy CMA. Jesmond House and nature strip can be seen to the right of the Hill along with the many heritage building of the City.



Obelisk Hill

A Community Coastcare Project

Bob Clifton
Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club

In October 1961 six young men formed the Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club under the auspices of the YMCA, to learn about bushwalking and to explore the Hunter region and its natural attractions. That was over fifty years ago and for the Club's Anniversary it sought meaningful activities to appropriately mark the occasion. In addition to a celebratory dinner for over 150 past and present members, the re-enactment of early bushwalks, and the publication of an anniversary magazine of selected items from the Club's archives, it was decided to have an involvement in a community project.

One of our members used to park her car in the street next to Obelisk Hill and was dismayed to see this wonderful location deteriorating through neglect at a time when its ownership was being determined. She proposed to the Club that interested members might get stuck into the restoration of the native vegetation and transform the site to something the community would be proud of. Following discussions with the Newcastle City Council our Club formed a Coastcare group in May 2010 and with some guidance from Council officers we embarked on what has been a four year love affair – an activity to complement our interest in bushwalking and the beauty of the natural environment.

For people who have not been to our wonderful City or have not visited Obelisk Hill, let me tell you of this brilliant historic location. It is the prominent hill

immediately south of the City's CBD and is a stiff little 120 m climb up Wolfe Street from Hunter Street.

Following the discovery of coal near the entrance to the Hunter River (Coal River) in 1797 a convict settlement was established in 1804 to mine coal. In 1820 the colonial authorities constructed a windmill on Obelisk Hill to mill corn for the growing population. It was later sold and the windmill was demolished in 1847.

By that time, however, the windmill had become a guiding mark for sailing vessels to navigate the tricky entrance to Coal River, and with ensuing outrage from the shipping industry and strong representation to the Governor it was replaced in 1850 by an obelisk at the spot where the windmill had stood. Later in 1884 an underground concrete reservoir was constructed next to the obelisk as part of Newcastle's permanent water supply. The reservoir remained in use for one hundred years until 1985. On cracker night that year an accumulation of gas in the reservoir exploded causing the roof to collapse and injure two young girls playing with fire works.

The obelisk itself suffered damage over the years from lightning strikes and the 1989 Newcastle earthquake, and is now not quite as tall as originally built. It is surrounded by wonderful heritage homes dating back to the late 1800s. Jesmond House opposite Obelisk Hill is a standout example built in 1860 by John Wood who made his fortune in the brewing business.

Our Club often includes a visit to Obelisk Hill on its twilight walks to take advantage of a sea breeze in summer and the stunning coastline walking opportunities which stretch from Nobby's Headland to Redhead Beach in the south.

But back to the Coastcare group. Working at least one Friday morning each month, our first task was to remove and dispose of the swathes of Bitou Bush, Lantana, Ficus vine, and seedling Date Palms which covered the surrounds and slopes of the Hill. Whilst the work was often physically demanding we enjoyed it immensely as a group of us made good progress during each working session. Clearing the weeds was one thing, but dealing with the rapid re-growth of all manner of weed species was another challenge. The technique that evolved was the covering of cleared areas with a thick mulch to prevent seed germination and retain soil moisture, before close planting of hundreds of native plants endemic to our coastline.

Our enthusiasm attracted some modest sponsorship from the City Council, the Catchment Management Trust, and the Hunter Water Corporation. This allowed us to acquire necessary tools, purchase plants for community planting mornings, and the purchase of two modern picnic table settings which were installed to take advantage of the wonderful views. In-kind assistance from the Council included the provision of plants, mulch, erosion control logs and the removal of green waste which was



A weed infested and eroded slope adjacent to the main stairway to the top of the Hill has been transformed into a garden of native plants.



Early days in 2010 clearing Bitou Bush from the eastern slopes (R); coastal wattle in full flower on the eastern slope in August 2014 - four years after the initial clearing (L).

invaluable and very much appreciated by the group. All plants have been sourced from 'Trees in Newcastle', a non-profit organization which propagates native plants of local provenance.

The Hill is also endowed with remnant tracts of Themeda grassland, which is recognised as a threatened plant community. The City and our group are having great success in improving its quality and restoring degraded locations with new plantings.


Our working sessions each month attract at least six to ten members of the Club and neighbours, and for example last year (2013) we worked a total of over 430 hours. Most of the hard work has been completed and it is with great pleasure and pride that we can reflect on the hours of outdoor activity and camaraderie, and to see this location alive with coastal wild flowers and increased bird life.

During 2014 we focused on the restoration of the Ordnance Street nature strip which is opposite Obelisk Hill and on the southern side of Jesmond House. With a 'Make your Place' grant from the City and a contribution from Jesmond House, extensive weed growth and accumulated rubbish were removed, and the slopes were stabilised before mulching and planting out with littoral rainforest and other species. The strip looks great.


We would love to show you around this iconic location of Newcastle – perhaps you might join us on a twilight walk or join in on a working session – check out our website. ♦



A weed infested slope against the World War defence emplacement has been re-vegetated with Themeda Grassland species.

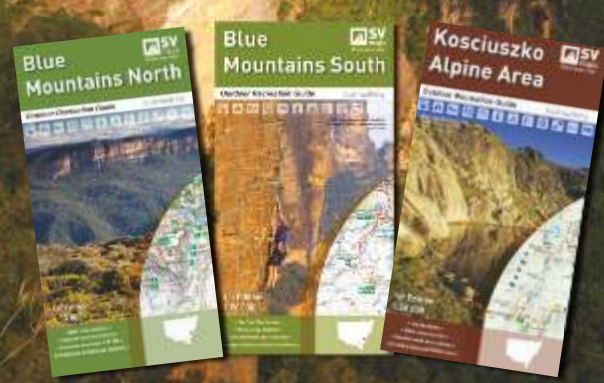


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The Flying Carpet and Koan Cave, Part 1

Michael Keats
The Bush Club



The ledge sticking out to the left.
Photo: Brian Fox

That was what it felt like when we stood there. A flat projecting rock platform midway (about 60m) up the eastern cliff face of Carne Creek, between the features known as, The Gurgler and Long Zig Zag Pass.

These words were uttered by bushwalker Yuri Bolotin when he first stood on one of the most unusual rock platforms in the entire Gardens of Stone National Park, and arguably the entire Greater Blue Mountains National Park. Now, for a feature to command such words it has to be spectacular. Having since been there I can only endorse his feelings. 'The sensation of floating in space' are words that came to mind.

The day I did the walk, 3rd November 2014, it was a fine, mild summer day with constant cloud cover varying from 7/8ths to 3/8ths during the course of the day. Low humidity, temperature range from 8 to 23 C.



Floating in space on The Flying Carpet. Photo: Geoff Fox

To reach the Flying Carpet the group followed the Long Zig Zag Pass, a natural pass giving access from the Newnes Plateau off the western side of Glowworm Tunnel Road above Carne Creek, 2.3 km E of Wolgan Pinnacle. This pass was described by Michael Keats on his Bush Club walk 10-Oct-2007: Cullen Bullen topo map, top of pass GR 405 151. This pass and several others in the same area were explored and proved as part of a program that year to discover as many ways of route as possible from the plateau down through the cliffs to Carne Creek. The discovery of the Flying Carpet by Yuri Bolotin in May 2014 stimulated a renewed interest in this area. As was discovered on this walk there are so many features in such a small area that had been overlooked in our earlier explorations.

Driving along the Glowworm Tunnel Road, the impact of unseasonal weather was clearly visible. Many trees burnt by the October 2013 fire have now died, in places with up to a 50% loss. The heavy snowfall of October 2014 had snapped off thousands of branches from trees that had

survived the fire. The effects of these two events meant a lot of forest areas were now more open and late spring flowers were now carpeting the ground. Pink Boronias and yellow Hibbertias were in full colourful display.

The vehicles were parked at GR 414 148 at 0846. Taking a comfort stop before the walk I found a 30 m of 10 mm rope on a log in the middle of nowhere. It appeared to be in serviceable condition. The briefing session behind us, we set off on an old access track to the NW, noting the dry conditions and the floral display. At 0904 we headed S to pick up the top of the descent into the Long Zig Zag Pass. We must have started the descent a little more to the W than last time as during the descent we came across a remarkable level area surrounded by high cliffs studded with pagodas, GR 407 152. What was unexpected was the number of cut stumps from very large trees that had been removed for timber milling. That accounted for the old access track. Disappointingly, there has been no regrowth of trees in the area at all. Seedling trees are absent.

A distant view of The Flying Carpet (at the left). Photo: Yuri Bolotin





The approach to the Long Zig Zag Pass. Photo: Yuri Bolotin



The Bush Club party at the tip of the Flying Carpet. Photo: Brian Fox

The Long Zig Zag route hugs the cliff line as it descends. Massive and ancient *Xanthorrhoea* plants add a sculptural element, contrasting to the somewhat weedy *Leptospermum* species that tower overhead. At 0934 we came across another feature missed on the 2007 descent: a significant level-floored cave complete with old fire hearth. The cave is 12 m across the mouth, 10 m high and 7 m deep. It was probably last used by foresters as a shelter cave. There were no observed artefacts of any kind.

After the cave the descent continued through scrubby undergrowth alternating with narrow vegetation-free rocky ledges. At GR 408 146 the ledge broadened and a large rock teetering on the cliff edge was chosen as a good spot for morning tea. It had great views across Carne Creek valley. We could view the starting point of our walk through the Wolgan Valley Resort done on 11th September 2014. The spectacular Zorro Pass descent point was also in view.



A level-floored cave on the descent. Photo: Yuri Bolotin

After morning tea ledge-walking dominated and at 1034 we rounded a projecting rock that forms the base of the Flying Carpet, GR 408 147. Another 20 m on we reached the proven ascent point where a 25 m tape-assisted climb gives access to a platform that is one of the most unbelievable experiences to be had in the Carne Creek valley and the Gardens of Stone National Park. The climb involves two set tapes over the 25 m vertical ascent.

Standing or sitting on The Flying Carpet is a truly unique experience. As you emerge from the slot at the top of the climb you look out over a sliver of rock about 3 m wide, although it is only half that width in the middle, and you look south along 12 m of undulating rock suspended in space. The floor of Carne Creek valley is nearly 200 m below. Above the Flying Carpet is a



The tape-assisted ascent to The Flying Carpet - it's a long way down. Photo: Brian Fox

sheer 30 m high bare rock face. It is a vertiginous place. As an experience it is unforgettable. The visit took the party just on an hour to get everyone up, take the photos, enjoy the view and then descend. ♦



Looking back at the cliffs from the tip of The Flying Carpet. Photo: Brian Fox

The trip that day went on to the Gurgler Pass and Koan Cave (more Bush Club names). Since the photos from this area are all so impressive, I have split the article into two parts so we can have lots of photos; the second part will be in the next issue. Ed.

Tales of a Walking Pole

Val Flint
Up and Downers

I belong to a small Sydney based bushwalking club, the Up and Downers BWC Inc, formally incorporated only in the year 2000. Whilst small in number, we are a committed and enthusiastic group with day walks offered on about 40 Saturdays each year and an average of about 10 walkers each week. In addition to day walks within about a 2 hour drive of the city, there are occasional social activities and longer “walking trips” organised. Our group is no different to most in that the opinions, backgrounds and views of the individuals vary enormously but we find great camaraderie in our mutual enjoyment of the physical challenges and visual delights of bushwalking.

Like many walking groups, the views on walking poles are many and varied with the “against” people citing that they are a nuisance, can snag on vegetation, get in the way when you are trying to open a map or eat a snack, or grab a hand hold, etc, that they can be environmentally damaging and that many pole users are inconsiderate of others on tracks by flailing about, hogging trail, carrying or dragging poles backwards when the track gets less steep or the user tires and thus putting others at some risk of personal harm. Of course the “for” people quote research and personal experience about preserving joints, reducing stress on knees, ankles, hips and spine, especially on downhill sections, of improved stability on stream crossing, soft ground or scree and of better confidence, power, endurance and posture.



Freycinet NP, Tasmania

David was definitely one of the “against” people, but as the years were beginning to creep up on him, he conceded that there might eventually be a time when a pole would be an advantage, but that time was somewhere vaguely in the future. In January 2013, 12 of our club headed to Tasmania for a group tour of part of the Tarkine wilderness. A relict from the ancient super-continent, Gondwanaland, the Tarkine contains Australia’s largest tract of temperate rainforest, and is home to more than 60 rare, threatened and endangered species. These include such unique animals as the Giant Freshwater Lobster – the world’s largest freshwater crustacean, and the Tasmanian Wedge Tailed Eagle – Australia’s largest

Eagle, and the famous Tasmanian Devil. The Tarkine is also one of Australia’s most important Aboriginal regions, and contains a diverse array of landscapes, from giant forests to huge sand-dunes, sweeping beaches, rugged mountains and pristine river systems. However, many of the Tarkine’s unique values are threatened by destructive activities such as new mining, logging, and illegal activities such as poaching and arson, and less than 5% of the Tarkine is protected as a National Park. The Tarkine’s future as a wild place hangs in the balance, with conflicting interests for protection and local employment.



En route to Huskisson River, Tarkine region, Tasmania

On one of our day walks we set off from a fixed camp site on Tiger Ridge to walk to the Huskisson River. The forest was just magnificent with huge messmates on the ridges and rainforest pockets of amazing diversity. Our guides Trevor and Jane gave us copious information on the region and its precarious future at frequent stops along the way and on one of these occasions, David stepped away from the group for a comfort stop. On rejoining us he was brandishing a walking pole. It had obviously been there for some time as there was lichen growing on the hand grip and it was impossible to adjust, but it was a well known high end brand. We were all intrigued as to how it came to be in such a remote trackless area. Perhaps another walker had had a similar reason to be in that spot on another occasion and had put their pole down and gone on without it. But we couldn’t help but wonder if the poor owner had got lost somewhere in the region and the Tasmanian Devils had only left the pole behind! David’s initial thought was to leave the pole at the camp site for use by visitors as needed, but by the time we returned later in the day, he had decided that since he had a birthday the following week, perhaps the forests were telling him something and it

was time for him to give this pole-assisted walking idea a more serious trial.

In the next 10 days the pole accompanied us around Tasmania to Philosopher Falls, from Pieman Heads north up the coast to Rupert Point, the Wineglass Bay-Hazards Beach loop, the gorge walk in Douglas Apsley National Park, on a day trip to Maria Island, to the Tahune Forest reserve and on a day walk in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park.



Mt Wondabyne, Brisbane Waters NP, the pole at far right

Back in Sydney, it has been part of so many wonderful day walks: Golden Stairs - Ruined Castle - Federal Pass - Furber Steps; Grose Vale - Grose River - Angle Vale; Stanwell Park - Sublime Point Lookout - Austinmer; Pulpit Rock to Neates Glen via the Grand Canyon; Rocket Point - National Pass - Slacks Stairs - Wentworth Pass - Valley of the Waters - Roberts Pass - Gladstone Pass; Asgard Swamp and Thor Head; Heathcote to Engadine via Karloo Track, Uloomooloolo Falls, Gurrumbulla Ridge, Kangaroo Creek, Forest and Goararra Ridges; Kings Tableland - Kedumba Valley - Lions Head; Forty Foot Falls and Box Vale Railway; Medlow Bath to Shipley Plateau; Mt Moulin circuit; and so many more.

It even got to travel to north eastern USA with David in October 2013 and travelled some sections of the Appalachian Trail, most notably an ascent of Katahdin, or Baxter Peak, the northern terminus of the trail.

David has certainly come to appreciate that the benefits of walking with a pole far outweigh the inconveniences. Perhaps the pole "sensed" that its work was done in that regard and it was time to find a new recruit? In May 2014 whilst walking in the Royal National Park from Helensburgh to Waterfall via the Burgh Track, Hacking River, Bola Ridge and Couranga Track, the pole got left behind somewhere not far from Garawarra Farm on Bola Ridge. By the time its absence was noted, it wasn't practical, given the

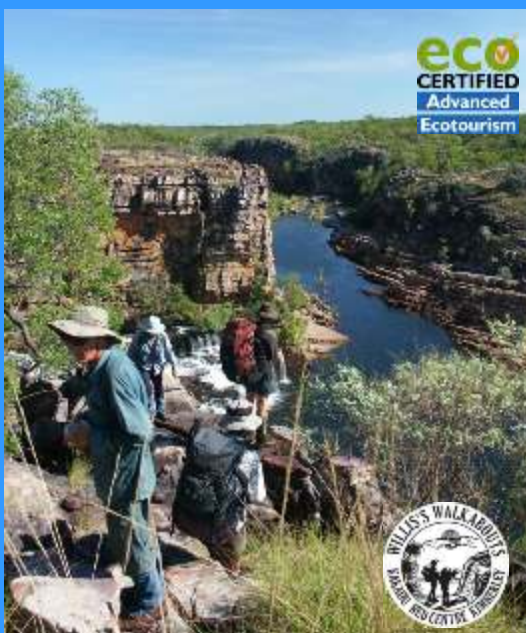


Baxter Peak, Maine, USA

size of the group and the time of the day, to mount a recovery expedition. Maybe one day, poles will come with a microchip in them and we'll be able to download their travels but for now we can only image where it travelled before David's tenure and hope that another keen walker has found it and will enjoy its company on more adventures! ♦

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The Hinkler Ring on Mt Pratomagno, Italy

Kevin Lindeberg

In July 2014 I was invited by the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) Arezzo Branch to revisit the 1933 death and crash site of renowned Australian pioneer aviator and national hero, Squadron Leader Bert Hinkler (1892-1933), on Mt Pratomagno in Tuscany, Italy. The site was first shown to me in July 1974 by Mr Gino Tocchioni, the man who first discovered Hinkler's crashed de Havilland Puss Moth (CF-APK) and Hinkler's body on 27 April 1933 after Hinkler went missing after leaving London's Heathrow Airport.



View from the tops

Hinkler was attempting to set another record-breaking flight from London to Australia when a problem caused him to attempt an emergency landing on the spine of Mt Pratomagno while flying down Valdarno, the Valley of the famous Arno River. He survived the crash but was injured. Photographic evidence suggested that he later succumbed to his injuries and exposure to the severe 1933 winter elements some 80 m further down the mountainside. His body was found in a composed lying position behind the protection of a couple of smallish bushes. He was accorded a State Funeral with full military honours by order of Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini. Mussolini greatly admired Hinkler, being a WWI pilot himself. Hinkler is buried in a modest grave in the cemetery on the outskirts of Florence. It now falls under the care and protection of the Commonwealth of Australia War Graves Authority.

Hinkler first flew a home-made glider on Mon Repos Beach at Bundaberg in 1912. Among other great record-breaking flights, he was the first man to fly solo from Sydney to Bundaberg, in 1921 in his Avro Baby, from London to Darwin, in 1928 in his Avro Avian and across the South Atlantic from Brazil to West Africa, in 1931 in his de Havilland Puss Moth, a flight commencing in Canada - via New York and Jamaica - and ending in London. He fought in WWI with the Royal Naval

Air Service and Royal Air Force, seeing action over Belgium, France and northern Italy and was awarded the DSM.

In July 1974, as a guest of the President of the Arezzo Aero Club, Prince Amedeo di Savoia, Duke of Aosta, I was taken to the crash sites along the bumpy spine of the mountain range in a jeep driven by the Duke with our very special passenger, an elderly Tocchioni, who guided us directly to the sites like a homing pigeon. I returned to these sites on several more occasions, including doing some long-shot but ultimately

fruitless searches in the immediate region for the Puss Moth's missing propeller blade. In August 1974 the Duke organised a special ceremony on his Il Borro estate – at the foothills of Mt Pratomagno – to present specially struck bronze medallions to the Italians who found and removed Hinkler's body in 1933, including the delighted and humble mountain man, Tocchioni.

On our last visit around September 1974, the Duke and I placed specially prepared markers on these two spots, planting one in the ground at the death site, and securely lashing the other to a

tree at the crash site. The markers were long wooden poles with a bright orange coloured tin-cone top to stand out against the seasonal green-leaved or snow white background on the side of Mt Pratomagno.

In early 2014 Mr Carlo Palazzini, of the CAI Arezzo Branch, contacted me seeking assistance and directions to find these two sites once again. The CAI wanted to create a mountain walking track to be called "the Hinkler Ring" to honour Hinkler's pioneering achievements - and to attract walkers from around the world for years to come to enjoy this beautiful Tuscan environment and its magnificent sweeping vistas.

On 24 April 2014 I received an email with an attachment: a photo of the weather-beaten marker high up in a tree which had an additional 40 years of growth since 1974. The other site marker was long gone. Because accuracy was vital, I was very generously granted a free return flight from Brisbane to Italy by Virgin Airlines Australia in late July to relocate the site if I could. On 24 July 2014 with my new CAI companions I retraced the footsteps of my youth on Mt Pratomagno and looked up at the marker still faithfully watching over the crash site. I unashamedly hugged the tree and said a grateful thank you. I was then able to locate the spot where Tocchioni said Hinkler's body was found on 27 April 1933.

A ceremony was held at the nearby chalet Da Giocondo on 27 July 2014 announcing the creation of "the Hinkler Ring" and monuments. It was attended by CAI members and politicians. The proprietors of Da Giocondo, who are also



The medallion on a topo map of the area



The Hinkler Ring – The red circled "H" marks the 1933 crash and death sites.



The marker at the crash site - up a tree

stone monument experts, have offered to construct the monument. It would be nice if a large contingent of Australian Bushwalkers could visit it. They could then walk the general Tuscany region, perhaps including a visit to the famous monastery of St Francis of Assisi across Casentino on Mt La Verna, especially given its association to the Croce on Mt Pratomagno's summit which is high altitude mark of "the Hinkler Ring". When no clouds cover the mountains, these historic sites in their magnificent pristine

environment can see each other across Casentino.

"The Hinkler Ring" walks is as follows (see 2nd picture):

1. Begin at Da Giocondo with its Hinkler memorabilia and guide book
2. Walk up to the summit of Mt Pratomagno and "the Cross/Croce"
3. Circle back to the 1968 Hinkler Memorial Monument [Cippo Hinkler] located near the summit (but which does not provide any accuracy regarding the 1933 crash/death sites for visitors)
4. Progress back down and West along Mt Pratomagno's spine to another of its high points [Poggio Varco di Castelfranco] to the remains of the original 1933 Hinkler Memorial



The Hinkler monument

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Alpine flowers on the ridge

Monument (blown up by Italian partisans during WWII as a protest against its apparent association with the Mussolini regime)

5. Progress further along the spine and down the mountainside to the track which leads East into the 1933 Hinkler crash and death sites, and the new 2014/15 Hinkler Death Site Memorial Monument
6. Progress East further along the mountainside track and come out from the mountainside to Da Giocondo

Anyone wanting more information or wishing to contribute in some way may contact the author at:

kevinlindeberg@bigpond.com or 0401 224 013. ♦

[The original rather long article has been condensed for publication here. I think I have included all the important details. Ed.]



COMING EVENTS

28 February - 6 hour, Pennant Hills

22 March - 3 hour, Central Coast

2 May- 6/12 hour, Wiseman's Ferry

www.nswrogaining.org

Burke & Wills Trek 2014

Paul Bateman



Sunrise Coongie Lake

The seed for this walk was planted after I saw an ad in the Great Walks magazine. For me it was an opportunity to experience the following - to learn the history of explorers Burke and Wills and walk in their footsteps, to walk in the Strzelecki and Sturts Stony Deserts and also the challenge of walking 330 km in 11 days. The trip was organised by the Born to Run Foundation to raise money and awareness for Juvenile Diabetes Research.

The walk started at the Dig tree on the 20 August which is the day that Burke and Wills left Melbourne back in 1860 and we would finish at the Birdsville Pub. There were several options for the walk: (1) the full trek which 31 walkers took part in, (2) the first 165 km which had 7 walkers or (3) the last 165 km for which there were 5 walkers. There was a group of 40 volunteers whose tasks included setting up the camp site each night, catering for all meals, (which was fantastically done by 4 guys from the Army), setting out the route to be walked each day, manning check points, setting-up repeater stations for radio coverage along the walk, and recording the walk on both video and camera. We also had 6 camels walking with us just as Burke and Wills had done. There were people from the Yandruwandha tribe who walked with us and also cleared the route so it did not pass through sacred sites. They also found grinding stones and nardoo seed as we were walking.

I travelled to the Dig tree with fellow trekkers Graeme from Sydney who had walked the Simpson Desert last year, Megan from Canberra who is Federal Police Officer and Dan who was our video maker. We travelled through a large rain band which had closed many out-back roads, but luckily the walk area was spared the rain. Arriving at the Dig tree with a day to spare we decided to head to Coongie Lake which is fed by the Northwest Branch of Cooper Creek. It is a large expanse of water surrounded by sand dunes with many midden sites. There were many types of birds including

a flock of Brolgas and sunset saw a few Dingos come to the water's edge for a drink.

Back at the Dig tree it was time to register, get our mandatory gear checked, meet our fellow trekkers and be told how the walk and camp will operate. This was followed by an introduction to the "wag bag" - an environmentally friendly way of disposing of your no 2's while in camp. Dave Phoenix, who is President of the Burke and Wills Historical Society, then gave us a talk about the history of the Dig tree and their camp 65. Burke and Wills along with Charlie Gray and John King had left the Dig Tree on the 16 December 1860. Dave would then add to the history after tea at each of the following nights camps, while sitting under the starry night sky.

Day one saw everybody up early keen to start. So, after packing up our tent, having a hearty breakfast, signing on and collecting our radio, it was time at 7.00 am to start the 40 km to camp two. Walking was mostly on the station tracks of Nappa Merrie and Innamincka Stations, some being quite rocky. We arrived at the camp after crossing Cooper Creek at about 4.15 pm. This camp was near the site where Burke died after he had arrived back at the Dig tree to find the rest of the team had left that morning. He decided to continue on to Mt Hopeless in the northern Flinders Ranges but didn't get very far when he came to his demise. Many of our trekkers had to deal with blisters after the long day of walking.

Day 2 was 32 km of walking along Cooper Creek, then passing through Innamincka station along some mining tracks to the camp, which was near cattle yards built in the late 1800's. We watched the 1985 Burke and Wills movie starring Jack Thompson (soon to be released on DVD) on the big screen, while sitting around the fire.

Day 3 would be 29 km. I decided to walk with the camels as my hamstring was sore and I needed to slow my pace. The camels walk at 4.3 kph or 3 mph. This 'fact' was used by Wills to work



Camp kitchen



Coongie Lake



Lunchtime



Walking on the gibber



Enjoying the finish



Team lots of legs plus 2



Camp 6



Ships of the desert

out how far they were travelling each day. He would then check his position each night by taking star observations to work out his latitude and longitude. The camels were led by Ryan and Natalie who are from the Flinders Ranges. They and some of their camels were involved with the movie 'Tracks', which is about Robyn Davidson's walk from Alice Springs to the Indian Ocean. It was a very enjoyable day learning about their life and adventures with the camels.

Day 4 was 32 km through the Strzelecki Desert, crossing 15 sand dunes and included another boat crossing of the northwest branch of Cooper Creek. Camp 4 was on a dry lake bed.

Day 5 was 30 km. We walked mainly between sand dunes as they were running in a northerly direction. After lunch we walked 2 km across Lake Wirregatinginie which was dry but still soft under foot. Camp 5 was at another dry lake bed, with a nice surprise of a hot shower rigged up by the organisers. This was due to their having spare water left over from previous camp sites. Each camp had a 1000 L water tank placed prior to the start of the trip. This was for drinking, cooking and washing dishes up (We were asked to use wet wipes to wash ourselves to conserve water). I was told water cost \$3.50 per litre.

This is also where we farewelled our fellow trekkers who were only doing the first half of the trek. Some were now wishing they had signed on for the whole trek. We were treated to a viewing on the big screen of some of the great photos of the first 5 days taken by photographer Michael Dillion.

Day 6 was 33 km again in the Strzelecki Desert across clay pans, dry lake beds and between sand dunes until we climbed to the top of a large dune. We walked along the top till it ran out on the edge of the Sturt Stony Desert. We had a great view from the top- there was our camp, set up on the Gibber which

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stretched as far as the eye could see. We welcomed the 5 new trekkers who arrived just before tea time.

Day 7 was a day I was really looking forward to (don't ask me why). We had 37 km in a straight line walking on the Gibber. Once we had gone about 8 km from our camp at the base of the sand dune you could turn 360 degrees and all you could see was Gibber as far as the horizon. To me this was the desert. My thoughts were with the explorers as they faced the Gibber not knowing how far it would go or when they would find water again.

Day 8 was 38 km, starting on the Gibber then on more dry lake beds before crossing the Birdsville Track. We then had 8 sand dunes to cross before reaching camp.

Day 9 was an easy 25 km, mostly over the dry lake bed of Lake Ulooaraine. The camp was near The Diamantina River on Pandie Pandie Station. After arriving at camp just after lunch I went with some of the volunteers to move the radio repeater mast to a spot not far from Pandie Pandie homestead, ready to be used for tomorrow's walk.

Day 10 was another easy 26 km walking past the station homestead, then a nice walk along the Diamantina River before heading back into sand dunes before arriving at our last camp.

Day 11 - the last day. After enjoying one last desert sunrise and climbing one last sand dune we had 16 km to go along the Birdsville Track before we trekkers, volunteers and camels all walked up the main street together to finish at the Birdsville Pub, watched by a crowd of grey nomads in town for the Birdsville Races. The end to a fantastic experience with a great group of people, and I would recommend it to any keen walker. A total of over \$80,000 was raised for Juvenile Diabetes Research. My thanks to those club members who donated to my fund raising effort. ♦



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**Mount Banks,
seen from the track between
Baltzer Lookout and Hanging Rock**

Photo: Sue Stuckey, Hill View Bushwalkers