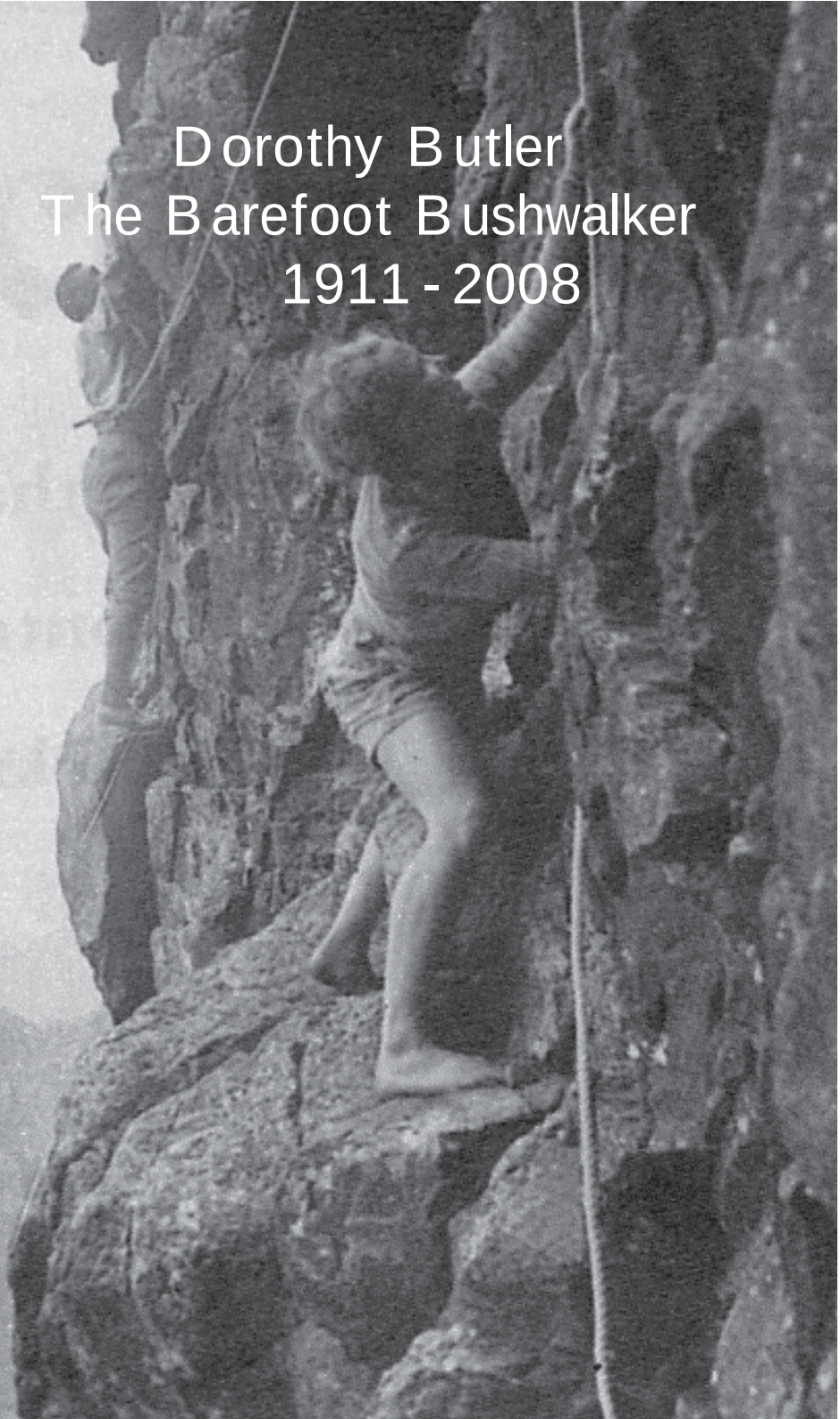


Dorothy Butler  
The Barefoot Bushwalker  
1911 - 2008



**THIS TRIBUTE TO  
DOROTHY BUTLER  
HAS BEEN COLLECTED OVER  
MANY YEARS AND CONTAINS  
ALL STORIES SHE WROTE FOR  
“THE BUSHWALKER”  
MAGAZINE/NEWSLETTER SINCE  
1934.**

**SHE DIED IN FRANKLIN  
TASMANIA WHILE LIVING WITH  
HER DAUGHTER RONA.**



**Dorothy Butler has encouraged many Australians, who, without her leadership encouragement and sense of adventure, would never have ventured into the bush, to explore and climb. In 1988 Dot was awarded the Australian Geographic's Award of Excellence.**

**The stories in this issue appeared in The Sydney Bush Walker Annual and The Bushwalker Annual over a number of years. Her book "The Barefoot Bushwalker" should be read by all bushwalkers.**

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# DOROTHY BUTLER

(1911-2008 )

Bush walker, Mountaineer and Conservationist

1911 Born in Sydney

1916-1921 Primary education, mainly at Homebush School

1922-1926 Attended Sydney Girls High School

1927 Attended Stott and Hoare's Business College; joined Bondi Icebergs and Bondi Beach Acrobatic Team

\*1931 Joined the Sydney Bush Walkers Club

1933-35 Completed physiotherapy course under auspices of Australian Massage Association at Sydney University

1936 First to climb \*\*Belourgy Spire in the Warrumbungles

1937 Climbed in New Zealand

1939 Worked at Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children and its Collaroy Rehabilitation Centre during the polio epidemic

1939-1941 Worked and climbed in New Zealand. Became a mountain guide

1943 Married bush walker and economist Ira Butler. They had 4 children

1956 Established the Australian branch of the New Zealand Alpine Club

1962 Member of Bushwalkers Search and Rescue

1969 Organized the Australian Andean Expedition to Peru

1969-1970 Climbed, cycled, walked in Peru, United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, Spain, Nepal, Cambodia

1970 Started fund for victims of the Peruvian earthquake. It ran for 20 years

1972 Climbed in Switzerland and Norway

1973 Husband, Ira, died of a heart attack

1977 Visited Galapagos Islands as field assistant to her son-in-law

1988 Awarded Australian Geographic Society's Gold Medallion for 'Adventurer of the Year'

1991 Autobiography *The barefoot bush walker* published by ABC Books

2004 Living in a nursing home in Franklin, Tasmania, where her daughter Rona and family live

*\*According to SBW records she joined on the 4th November 1932*

*\*\* Now known as Crater Bluff.*

**Dorothy Butler** was the fourth of five children of Isadora (Goff) and Frank Alfred English, a traveling salesman in pharmaceutical products who was seldom home and had disappeared by the time Dorothy was eleven. He taught his young children the Greek alphabet, and considered Dorothy *to be the best of the brood*. Their mother developed their love of literature and poetry. The children were encouraged them to fend for themselves and solve their own problems.

Shortly after her birth, when the family moved to Brisbane, Dorothy first showed her flair for the original and unconventional when suffering from measles (an infectious disease) she was smuggled aboard the ship disguised as a brown paper parcel!

No gender distinctions were made in her family, which enabled Dorothy, an inveterate tomboy from an early age, to join her brothers in their extensive explorations of each new suburb during the family's frequent moves. These numerous excursions developed in Dorothy a keen sense of adventure and a passionate love of nature which moulded the rest of her life. At school she was a clever student and talented in all fields of sport.

With money earned in her first job as a stenographer, Dorothy, who never saw being a woman as an obstacle to any undertaking, cycled around Tasmania on her own, barefoot and wearing shorts. Immune to the stares of the locals, she was very

surprised when it was suggested that she put on long pants (if she had no skirt), or *a cop would pull her up!* Throughout her life she always walked, climbed and cycled barefoot and wearing only shorts and shirt whenever possible. She celebrated her 21st birthday by cycling to Mt Kosciusko, camping out on the way.

In 1931 she was one of the first women to join the Sydney Bush Walkers, where she became a member of the first high-powered bushwalking group called 'The Tigers', a title earned after an epic 3 day walk of 75 miles, climbing 9000 feet in the unmapped and trackless Blue Mountains. The Tigers, with their frequent far-ranging walks, were able to provide Miles Dunphy (the 'father' of bushwalking and conservation) with invaluable information for the map of the Blue Mountains he was making. She was also a regular "Bondi Iceberg"

Through their association with the Club, Dorothy and Marie Byles (See Fact File) became lifelong friends. Marie was an experienced mountaineer, having climbed in New Zealand, Scotland, Canada and Norway and with Dorothy, formed part of the first group to climb the Warrumbungles Crater Bluff in 1936.

\*Dorothy also founded and edited the *Sydney Bush Walkers Magazine* to which she was a significant contributor. She wrote with humour and warmth, and often ended her contributions with a poem of her own.



A climbing trip to New Zealand in 1937 began a love affair with its magnificent mountains which lasted for rest of her life. Dorothy was accepted as a member of the prestigious New Zealand Alpine Club, and in 1956 was instrumental in gaining permission for an Australian Section. Having worked as a mountain guide in the Mt Cook National Park, Dorothy trained members in mountaineering, climbing, river crossing and safety, and, each Christmas for the next 25 years took a group to New Zealand for an adventurous and rapturous (for Dorothy at least!) 6 weeks in the mountains! By 1968 the club had a pool of very competent climbers so she organised an expedition to the Andes in Peru, where the group spent 3 months climbing and winning the trust and friendship of the villagers. After a severe earthquake in the region in 1970, Dorothy set up and administered a permanent relief fund which was still providing money 20 years later.

Dorothy was undeterred by the arrivals of 4 children, who began their bushwalking careers as babies and grew up to be as self reliant and adventurous as their mother, sharing her passionate love of nature.

As an early conservationist in the 1930's she helped set up the Rangers League to develop public awareness and promote protection of native plants, birds and animals, and was involved in setting up Volunteer Bushfire Brigades. She worked for the

Sydney Bush Walkers' many conservation projects which resulted in the creation of various Reserves for Public Recreation. She assisted her friend Marie Byles in having Boudi officially declared a National Park, and worked with the Colong Committee (the oldest National Wilderness Society in Australia) in the Save the Rainforest Campaign and the creation of the Blue Mountains National Park. Over many years she has been involved with Lake Pedder in Tasmania, the Daintree, Kakadu and the Myall Lakes National Park.

With her infectious enthusiasm for life, Dorothy Butler has never failed to live up to her motto: *Energy begets energy* and in doing so has shown that with self confidence and courage there is nothing that a woman cannot do.

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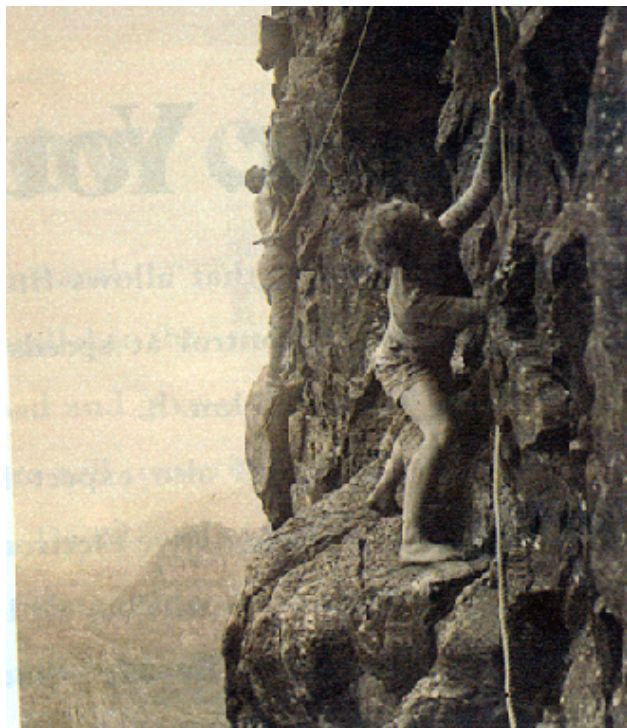
Direct communication with Rona Pettigrew, her daughter

© Jessie Street National Women's Library (August 2004)

*\* No mention of Dot's name either in the body of Magazine or in the editorial section of magazine can be found. Dot joined SBW in 1932 a few years after the mag was born.*

# THE ROCKS ARE HER FRIENDS

by Gillian Coote and published in *The Australian Geographic*



But when I turned into her driveway I was confronted with a blaze of native

plants flannel flowers, erioestemon and grevillea under a canopy of Sydney blue gums. Not a clipped lawn in sight!

Dot appeared, nut-brown, barefoot, wearing shorts and wielding a spade. She was preparing her vegetable gardens for the spring sowing, as I found when I followed her to a huge mound of compost, which she spaded into a wheelbarrow and vigorously began to dig into the soil while we talked. We were already surrounded by her giant and luxuriant winter vegetables, exploding with vitality - just like Dot.

IT'S not often you meet somebody much older with whom you feel an instant rapport. But that's how it was when I first met Dot Butler, who is 30 years my senior, yet now, at the age of 77, stronger and fitter than I am, and AG's 1988 Adventurer of the Year.

That meeting was five years ago at her home in the treelined suburb of Wahroonga, on Sydney's North Shore, where many of the gardens are grand and formal, befitting the residences.

When I got to know this fountain of wisdom, generosity and positive energy better I doubted if she had ever in her lifetime rested as long as a month! She has a confident spirit born of a deep harmony with life, a radiant smile and a beautiful face, lives simply - working for or sending money to good causes, feeding her ducks, walking with old mates from the Sydney Bush Walkers. She rides her bike to the shops. And why not?

Dot has never taken much notice of what society might expect of her.

"Eccentricity is just being ahead of your time,' she laughed during our most recent chat while sitting on her veranda, her bare legs tanned and muscular. At 5 a.m. next day she would be driving herself to Brisbane to celebrate her 77th birthday with her daughter Rona and grandchildren

"all our childhood entertainment was climbing - brick kilns, chimneys, telegraph poles - anything off the horizontal, and always barefoot of course".

So Dot the fearless child became the fearless adult who delighted in walking and climbing. While doing a Sydney University course to qualify as a physiotherapist, she would run to



and help build their mudbrick house. En route she would call on her son Wade\* and drop off some secondhand doors and windows. Accidents claimed the lives of her other son and daughter (Wendy drowned while cascading with university friends in the Blue Mountains, and Norman from a taipan bite). Dot's husband died in 1972.

Born Dorothy English in Sydney, one of five children, Dot recalls that

*\*Wade also was lost in the Tasmanian bush in 1997. After an extensive search by authorites and a private search by Dick Smith, no trace of him was found.*

her classes from Circular Quay, taking well under an hour.

But her main passion was bushwalking and as an early member of the Sydney Bush Walkers she became a member of "The Tigers", one of only two women among a select group of gung-ho walkers who loved marathon weekend walks, often covering 150 kilometres. Dot walked barefoot, of course! Her physiotherapy experience convinced her that shoes can ruin womens posture - and she abandons them at every opportunity.

"I always felt at one with the rock , " she told me. "Rocks are my friends



and I caressed them as I climbed. They told me what I could and couldn't do. People who climb in boots and overalls are cutting themselves off from that contact."

condemnation of the head guide by climbing in his sandals. "He'll come to no good," the guide predicted of the young Edmund Hillary!) "There was also a guide there who used to



In 1936 Dot and the late Dr Eric Dark, leading climber and bushwalker, made the first ascent of the difficult Crater Bluff in Warrumbungle National Park. As was her habit, Dot climbed in the lead, taking up the rope and finding something to tie it to: they had no pitons, or rock bolts. In re-creating this famous climb for a film, Dot was played by her daughter Rona and Dr Dark by Wade, both experienced climbers. Dot climbed up with the film crew - nimble and sure. I was left far below, somewhat shaken.

From 1939 Dot spent almost three years in New Zealand, where her work as a guide in the Mt Cook National Park was an important influence on her later activities. (She recalls with wry amusement one keen young visitor who provoked the

take tourist parties up the Franz Josef Glacier," Dot recalled. "He would give them a regular spiel to the effect that ... 'This glacier comes down from 9000 feet to sea-level, it has 3672 crevasses and there's an Australian down every one of them!'

"Unfortunately it was true that Australians would get into trouble, because they had no experience of crevasse country. But I felt ashamed, and dreamed of the day I'd go back to Australia and start a mountaineering school to teach Australian climbers about safety."

After the war, Dot began her school by founding the Australian section of the New Zealand Alpine Club. Crack climbers from the New Zealand club offered their services, and crevasse rescue was part of the course. For

nearly 30 years Dot took parties of young climbers to New Zealand each Christmas. "Today when I look at all the young people who are climbing the Andes and the Himalayas, and even in Antarctica, I can often say, 'Well, some of those are my boys'," Dot said. Mt Dot in New Zealand's Southland National Park is named after her.

Dot married Ira Butler, a fellow bushwalker, in Australia during the war. He had been posted to Melbourne and proposed by letter. Unable to get a seat on an interstate train, Dot rode her bike to Melbourne to marry him. On her return journey she rode from Melbourne to Albury on the NSW border before she could get a seat. She estimates she cycled 32,000 km during the war.

In 1968 Dot took a crash course in Spanish and became organiser and a member of the nine-strong Australian Andean Expedition, which in 1969 made 27 different ascents (13 of them firsts) of 19 mountains in Peru's Cordillera Vilcabamba.

Ira's work with the Reserve Bank took him overseas, and Dot accompanied him when she could, shedding hats, gloves and sometimes shoes to climb at every opportunity. She has climbed in the Himalayas and the Alps, canoed 640 km down the Yukon River in Canada, and cycled through Ireland, Spain and Cambodia. She says she would like to cycle through China. Her least-documented (for obvious reasons) climbs have been over the arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge - as a member of a high-spirited group calling themselves the "Night Climbers of Sydney", who set them-

selves late-night challenges such as scaling city buildings or finding their way through the underground sewers.

When Dot began bushwalking nearly 60 years ago it was in its infancy as an organised pursuit - usually thought of as exercise for eccentrics.

"There were empty spaces on the map," Dot said, "and we would fill them in. I'd write them up in the Sydney Bushwalker and this encouraged many others to take up the adventurous life. Now I think the future for Australians will be in regeneration. We have to try to repair the damage we've done to the country.

# THE FIRST ASCENT OF BELOURGERY SPLIT ROCK\* - WARRUMBUNGLES



Crater Bluff - Warrumbungle NP - photo Colin Wood

*By Dot English  
from The Bushwalker Annual 1936*

Australia is a land of paradoxes. Our magpies are not magpies, nor our pee-wees pee-wees, nor even our wagtails wagtails; and during Parliamentary elections each aspiring member of the Opposition hastens to assure us that the Honourable Members of the House are not honourable.

Having had our childhood faith shattered in so many directions, it will come as no shock to be told that our mountains are not mountains, that

*\*This peak is now known as Crater Bluff, and not to be confused with Split Rock overlooking what now is a picnic area or Belourgerie Spire.*

they are merely plateaux fissured by deep gullies—inverted peaks if you like—quite an upside-down arrangement.

When you realise that these disconcerting facts are continually being dinned into the brain by every would-be ornithological, political and geological expert, it is small wonder that one comes at last to believe them. So it is a pleasant surprise to discover that rising 2,500 feet from the plains of the flat western slopes, some 200 miles north west of Sydney, loom the Warrumbungle Ranges, whose summits, although only 4,000 feet high, can be definitely termed mountains in the true sense of the word, some of them being stark, rocky peaks, rising naked above the forest lands.

They are very arid mountains, for the streams seldom flow except when in flood, and the so-called "springs" are generally merely seeps of water which collect in rocky basins, utilised by the eagles as bathrooms, and consequently not particularly inviting to mountaineers.

Still, arid or not, they are mountains, and our party of six had made its way towards them via Gilgandra and Tooraweanah (two of us being kindly driven out from Gilgandra by the father of our Club member, Evelyn Higinbotham), and pitched camp on a clearing at the foot of the western face of Split Rock, whose sheer, trachyte walls towered 1,500 feet or more above our tents, which, by the way, were situated a ten minutes' walk from the nearest "spring."

This mountain, one of the few remaining unclimbed peaks in this land of ours, was to be the victim of our serious attack, and it had on the whole, quite formidable opponents.

There was Dr. Eric Dark, valiant President and sole survivor of the Katoomba Suicide Club, whose members considered it a recreation to crawl up and down the decayed, sandstone faces of the Blue Mountain cliffs, in such precarious spots as no one without suicidal tendencies would ever dream of attempting.

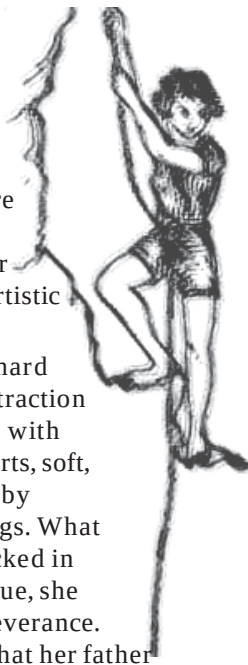
Next comes Marie Byles, who can claim to her credit numerous virgin peaks scaled in other lands, having mountaineered in Scotland, Norway, Canada and New Zealand. All these achievements were, however, merely a background as far as I was concerned; to me she was a voice crying in the

cold, pale dawn, while the stars still snapped in the quiet heavens, "Time to get up!"

Then there was Mr. Paszek (pronounced "Parshek"). We called him Pan ("a" as in half). He was Polish, and had spent much of his youth climbing in the Dolomites and the Swiss Alps, as a member of the Tatra Mountaineering Club. Pan was a beautiful thing, with lean, picturesque figure surmounted by a silver halo of hair and with long, artistic fingers.

Suzaiine Reichard was an added attraction to the landscape, with powder-blue shorts, soft, clear skin and baby dimples in her legs. What she may have lacked in climbing technique, she made up in perseverance. When I explain that her father is an Alsatian, you can trace the origin of this trait.

Concerning Frank Preeguard, he openly and honestly made no claim to being a climber. His presence in the party was justified by the fact that he was a photographer, and also, incidentally, a walking Baedeker of the locality. "What's that peak over there?" asks someone, pointing out a faint, blue smudge on the horizon, crowded by numerous other faint smudges; and forthwith Frank gives its name and history, past, present and to come.



Since we are becoming personal, it would perhaps be as well to bring myself into the picture. As the Society page of the "Warrunbungle Weekly" put it: "She work a ducky little pair of shorts, cutely fashioned from the dust-cover of a taxi, picked up one night in Hyde Park, dyed khaki, artistically slashed and gored, and patched on the seat."

This depicts only my outward appearance; inwardly I came armed in the knowledge that I had been the best of our gang as kids in climbing trees, telegraph poles, flagpoles, railway embankments, excavation works, underground sewer-holes, brick-kiln chimneys and sea cliffs, and strong in the faith that "Nothing is Impossible."

I could go on for hours telling you of the members of the party, but that's not what I'm here for. I have to tell you how we climbed the Split Rock, so enough!

The first two days we did a little test climbing up the Bluff and the Needle, so as to get used to the feeling of being roped together. Believe me, at first it didn't appeal to me in the slightest, this being inescapably tethered to one end of a rope, and thereby having my fate linked, willy-nilly, to that of whatever reckless or careless brother climber might be on the other end. I was as suspicious as a cat whenever I noticed my partner on the rope contemplating a risky climb; you bet I was thinking of my own safety as much as his. However, as a knowledge of the prowess of my partners increased, I became more or less reconciled to being tied up to them, but a comparatively restful mind was only the result of eternal

vigilance.

Before attempting the Split Rock, we circumambulated it numerous times and surveyed it from all angles, bringing the spy glasses to bear on such spots as seemed to offer likely foot and hand holds to the summit.

Until you have rock-climbed, you have no idea how deceptive heights can be. What look like reasonable steps when viewed from below, turn out to be huge blocks 15 or 20 feet high, quite impossible to surmount.

We tackled the northern face first, and spent half a day in reaching a spot about a quarter way up, which we finally had to abandon as impracticable. Failure? Perhaps—but you weren't there to see the place for yourself, so how can you judge us?

The next day Doc., Pan and I, after lengthy deliberation and ponderous calculation, cast a vote in favour of the western face.

Although this is by far the greatest height, the slope of the rocks seemed to be in our favour, being comparatively free from the overhangs which spoilt our chances on the south and east faces.

We waited till about 10 o'clock for the sun to rise sufficiently to warm the atmosphere, for our experience on the shady side of the Needle, in the chill of the late afternoon, had taught us that it is only adding an extra handicap to try to climb in a refrigerated atmosphere on cold rocks, with an icy wind trying to whip you off your perch, and your fingers so stiff and blue with the cold that it takes fully a minute to straighten them out after relinquishing one grasp for another.



Setting out with 200 feet of rope, we found the first five or six hundred feet easy—a "walk-up" as we say in professional circles—and we hardly had to use the rope at all. But having reached that height, it then became necessary to traverse sideways before we could continue our upward climb. We had agreed that when there were vertical up and down climbs to be done, I was to lead the way, being the most ape-like, and when it was a question of sideways traverses the Doc. would go first on the rope, as he was a specialist in this form of progression. Accordingly we took up our positions, with the Doc. leading me in the middle and Pan on the other end. Now, Pan had reached that age of discretion when a man knows his limitations, and after a good look at the place we intended to cross, told us to go on alone, as he didn't think he wanted to go any further. So he waited there, on one end of the 100 foot rope, while we two of lesser caution set out to traverse a very dangerous 200 feet of cliff face.

If I took as long to tell you about it as it took to do it, you would be reading for hours. Inch by inch we edged along, clinging to scarcely perceptible ledges of grey, lichen-covered rock, feeling our way in those places where we couldn't turn to see for fear of upsetting our balance by a fraction of an inch, pausing now and then on some relatively safe ledge to draw a deep breath, for the suspense kept us so tense we hardly dared to breathe, and then on again, high above the giant Eucalyptus which, in the valley below, appeared to our wide-open eyes no bigger than match

sticks; and always the huge eagles,

wheeling aloft, surveying us from their untamed heights with fierce, contemptuous eyes. If they chose to attack us as we clung like limpets to that stark rock face, we knew who would come off best.

About two thirds of the distance

across  
brought  
us to a  
narrow  
slit in the  
rock face,  
not more  
than a  
foot wide,  
into  
which I  
wedged  
the lower  
part of



my anatomy while I collected my breath, the Doc. meanwhile draping himself over a jutting piece of loose rock, which, in contrast to the dizzy ledges just passed, was as safe as the Bank of England.

Here we stuck, body half attached and half free, like exploring leeches, while we took in the next stretch of our journey and discussed our prospects. Could we go on, or ought we call it a day? I don't

know what the Doc's thoughts on the subject were, but mine were "I'm damned if I'm going back the way we've come!" I would have preferred to take a flying leap into space, in the hope of gliding gracefully down to the base of the mountain, rather than retrace my steps along those hair-raising ledges.

We must have perched there for a quarter of an hour. The sun was shining on us, and it was so nice and warm that I didn't care if we never went on. However, the Doc., who has the true spirit of a mountaineer, soon tired of ignoble inaction and was eager to be off again. As I happened to be somewhat in front, it was decided that I should now lead the way, for it would have been risky to attempt changing places on the rope, so accordingly I set off along the verticle wall of rock, clinging to what faint markings I could, while the Doc. held the rope belayed around his wretched loose boulder. I can't say I went any more carefully because of the fact that the boulder was loose—having already reached the limit of utmost caution—but I knew perfectly well that if I slipped, my sudden weight on the rope would dislodge the rock and Doc., and that we should accompany it, with a wild crash, into the valley below.

Even as I'm writing this, my heart is going thump, thump, thump, my breath is trembling and I'm biting furiously at my finger nails. I wouldn't mind betting there are a few more pints of adrenalin coursing through the system than normally.

With infinite caution, I proceeded to a bulging shoulder of rock which had been blocking our further view. What lay on the other side would determine whether we went on or not. I flattened on to it and peered round the corner, with bulging eyes, while the Doc. called, with suppressed excitement, "What about it? Can you go on?"

"Oh, yes, it's easy," said I with a

laugh that was meant to be reassuring, but which sounded more like the uneasy laugh a man gives when he is pretending he isn't afraid; so after I had belayed our life line over an embossed knob an inch or so high, the Doc. traversed across and was soon by my side.

"Would you like me to go first?" he asked. You might be inclined to pass this over lightly as being just an ordinary example of masculine chivalry, but believe me, it meant more to me than I can ever express. The true heroism of a man's character shows itself when life is at stake. Doubtless I would

have gone on if this outlet had not been offered me, but if so I swear I would not be here now to tell the tale.

It was necessary to change places on the rope, otherwise it would not have run through the belay, so we crouched on a couple of ledges along which even a lizard would have thought twice about passing, while we carefully untied the few knots which lay between us and the Hereafter, and swapped places. Let it be known, to my eternal discredit, that I had privately thought I was the better climber of the two, but when the Doc., without a moment's hesitation, prepared to round that corner, I knew all the humiliation of pricked self-conceit.

Crouching there, with my back turned, the ledge being too narrow to reverse my position, swearing softly under my breath, and with my little finger clutching frantically the stem of a struggling piece of mountain vegeta-



tion, hardly as thick as a lead pencil, I screwed my head over my shoulder and glued my eyes on the rope, sinuously sliding over the belay.

My companion had spread eagled himself over the surface of a huge mass of overhanging rock, grey with loose, dry lichen, and was clawing his way over with finger nails and toes, like a cat trying to take a corner at full speed on a polished floor.

He is out of sight now over the top. What lies on the other side? God knows. There may be a sheer drop away. If so, this is the end—that little knob of rock won't stand the strain of a sudden jerk. Be strong, little rock, be strong!

Is there anything more discouraging than the deceit of a friend? Although it was such a frail support to depend upon, we were relying on that little rock, and right at the critical moment, it let our rope slip off.

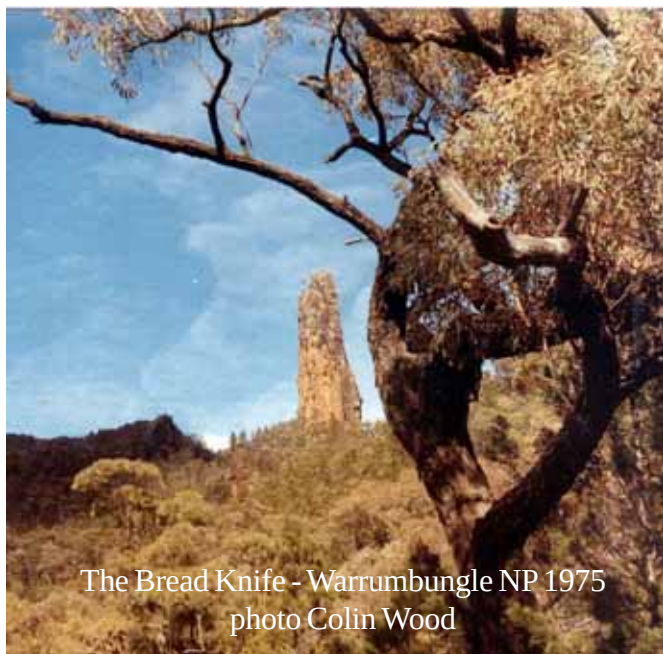
Novelists tell us that when people are facing utter destruction, they pray or begin a review of their lives—no doubt a hurried collecting together of their good qualities so as to have them at their finger tips when St. Peter calls for reasons why they should not be forever damned. I cannot claim any such experiences. It would appear that we fear death till it is almost upon us, and then we become quite calm; after all, it would be a great adventure to die. The first shock over in a second, I pictured us dropping down through the hot, scented air, which blew cool in our faces in our swift descent. The tree-covered slopes far below looked so soft and cushiony that it was ridiculous to think we would hurt

ourselves if we fell on them. Still, even if we were not borne up by unseen hands before hitting the bottom, we would be soon after, so what did it matter anyhow?

However, all this expenditure of thought was unnecessary, for I soon heard a voice calling from the other side that there was an excellent ledge there, and all was well. It didn't take many moments for me to reach his side;—a rope around the waist, held by a comrade with a cool head and a steady hand, plus the knowledge that there is a safe haven round the bend, gives one amazing confidence.

The remaining hundreds of feet to the summit were so easy in comparison that they can be dismissed with brief mention. We were now on a broad highway several yards wide, overgrown with vegetation and bearing some quite tall eucalyptus, up one of which we climbed to the next level. There were a few more craggy ledges to crawl round, and the dry course of a waterfall to climb up, polished to a black smoothness, but not so slippery as it looked, being honeycombed with innumerable small pit marks.

We were making for that wide split in the mountain side which gives the rock its name. This was soon reached, and gazing through it, what a sight met our eager eyes! A huge, hollow crater, luxuriously carpeted with thick green grass, knee deep in which one lone silver-barked tree stood like a guardian sentinel. Rising till they lost themselves in the blue heaven, were a dozen or so magnificent, rugged peaks whose heaped, stratified grandeur made one think that so the Earth's



The Bread Knife - Warrumbungle NP 1975  
photo Colin Wood

matter to climb up it, holding on to the ferns.

While resting by a tumbled avalanche of the sharp, igneous rock, I found, growing in a thimbleful of earth, a cluster of delicately-marked toadstools—such dainty, pretty, fairy things; they seemed too little to be left alone in that vast, forbidding, prehistoric crater. I would tell Pan about them and he would come up in the morning and look after them, and then

surface must have appeared to the eyes of our prehistoric forebears. To think that we were, without doubt, the first people to set foot in that place which had lain undisturbed for so many millions of years in ageless silence under the hot summer sun, or reverberating to the hollow crash and roar of thunder pealing through its vaults! We felt we had obtained a glimpse of some far away, dimly-remembered period in the days when the world was young.

Flowing round the bases of these jagged peaks swept a glacier-like river of miniature tree ferns, which extended in thick, glossy green formation for some 800 feet right from the summit as far down as the entrance to the cleft. This solved our problem as to how we were to reach the top. Although the glacier fell almost vertically in places, it was quite a simple

they wouldn't feel lonely or frightened any more. Pan spoke their language and understood them, as he understood what the birds said. It was he who heard the music of the night, and saw the little fairy folk among the trees in the moonlight, peeping curiously from the dusky shadows at the red glow of our camp fire. They might have come over to talk to us if we had asked them, but they are very shy and don't come unless they are asked.

Here conies the Doc., and off we go again on our upward climb. Our excitement increased as we approached the top, and at length we skipped out into the bright sunlight and knew we had achieved our goal.

We stood on a narrow, grass-grown rim, rough with piled rocks, among which grew a few small bushes. Buzzing around these were a number of golden wasps with glittering wings.

"You're high up in the world, little ones."

Sitting on a heap of rocks, munching chocolate and dates, we felt like knights of old surveying our wide domain from the turrets and battlements of our castle. Extending to the far horizon in all directions stretched a wrinkled sea of green. Far away a bluer line marked the beginning of the Pilliga scrub of the far west. Close about us the varied peaks of the Warrumbungle Range displayed their bizarre, distinctive shapes, and overhead was a sky as brightly blue as the shallows of the sea on a blue day. Floating on this, fairy islands of cloud lay over the plains in ever increasing circles; but the eagles which, earlier in the day, had watched our laborious efforts to reach the heights to which they soared so effortlessly, were nowhere to be seen.

The Doc. had a box of matches in his pocket, which gave us the inspiration to light a fire in the hope that the folk in the township of Tooraweena, some ten miles away would see it and rejoice with us, and also to set the minds of the others of our party at rest, for none of them knew how we had progressed since we had left Pan, hours ago, with the 100 foot rope, to see himself down to our base camp as best he could.

So we set fire to a heaped pile of dry grass and sticks, and threw on green branches from the near-by bushes, which produced a dense white smoke, making the mountain seem like a volcano in eruption.

Leaving the fire to attend to itself, we descended a small dip and

climbed a point of rock a yard or so higher than the one we were on. Here we erected a cairn of stones, for all true mountaineers thus leave their mark on virgin peaks conquered. Some five minutes later, when we turned our attention to the fire once more, we found it had assumed much larger proportions—in fact it had spread to such an extent that we were now cut off by the flames and had to perch, marooned, on top of our cairn till the blaze died down. Even then it was necessary to wait some time longer for the heat to leave the ashes, as I didn't know how invulnerable the hide on my bare feet (I always climb bare-footed) might be to red-hot embers. It would have looked funny to the gods who watch over the doings of man if the Doc. had had to piggyback me over the glowing embers and smoke along that narrow rim of mountain top; but luckily it wasn't necessary.

The sun was now westering, so we made haste to descend, as we didn't quite know how or where we were going to get down. I own I felt a bit uneasy as I thought of those traverses, now in the cold shade, with nothing at all to recommend them and everything to condemn them. We slid down the green glacier as down a slippery dip, and gained much amusement thereby. The Doc. slid on his seat and I went head first, as my pants, already in the final stages of disintegration, would not have stood up to any harsh treatment.

On reaching the waterfall again, we turned our attention to the south instead of the north, and hoped for the best. It proved to be an excellent move,



and we soon found ourselves on a ledge overlooking a drop of a mere 200 feet to the hillside below, only 100 of which was difficult climbing. We already had 100 feet of rope, and if we could get the other 100 it would be a simple matter to descend. So we hollered for Pan and eventually got a reply. He brought along the 100 foot rope and climbed up as far as he could with it, while I climbed down as far as I could on our rope. Holding on to the end of this, I stuck my leg out while Pan did the cowboy stunt and eventually succeeded in lassoing my foot. I then climbed back with this rope, and by means of the two of them, we descended once more to terra firma, after six hours on the mountain.

We left the ropes tied there, and next day Pan and I brought Suzanne and Marie up that way. It seemed a very easy performance to me after those awful traverses, but Marie informs me that according to New Zealand and Canadian mountaineering standards, it would not be considered an easy rock-climb by any means, even with the fixed ropes.

Well, there you are folks; thus ends my tale!

As an incentive to prospective climbers of this mountain, let me add that after we had safely taken the party up and down again on the following day—only possible by means of the fixed ropes—we flicked these from round the rocks that were holding them, and as they fell at our feet we saluted the grim giant saying, gloatingly, "That's the last time anyone will get up you .... unless it's by aeroplane." Such is our conceit. It's an open challenge!

## FREE GASTRONOMICAL JOYS

*by Dorothy English*

*From The Sydney Bush Walker - 1934*

Come on, all you independent spirits, who would be beholden to none for your creature comforts. Get you out into the lonely bush, and along the desolate sea-shore, and see how you fare when there is none to provide shelter for your head or food for your stomach, away from

"That all-softening,  
overpowering knell,

The tocsin of the soul—  
the dinner bell,"

and see if you can live as the sparrows live—on just what old Nature provides.

And what does she provide?

It is said that all life emerged from the sea, so let us visit our ancient watery home in search of sustenance.

I had it (unofficially) from the Marine Zoologist at the Museum, that everything in the sea is edible; nevertheless I would not recommend that any aspiring devotee of Natural Living take to eating clam-shells, even for their lime content, nor sample the succulent blue-bottle. However, practically all the little shell-fish of our coast are edible. In the Islands it is often found that, whereas the natives of one island consider a certain shell-fish poisonous, the natives of another island include it as a staple part of their dietary. The internal portion of

the sea-urchin is said to be quite a delicacy to the Italians, while the Chinese revel in seaweed biscuits. These biscuits, though resembling, in my opinion, nothing so much as a sun-dried frog, are extremely appetising, but all my efforts to manufacture a similar product from the sea-kale of Era were futile. Perhaps there is some secret process used. However, sea-kale eaten raw is quite good.

There is no necessity for me to mention fish, oysters, crabs, lobsters, prawns or crayfish. Everyone knows they are worth eating, but not everyone is familiar with eels as food. Try them.

Suppose we leave the sea-shore and follow up one of our rivers, right into the heart of the bushland. On such a river as the Cox, watercress is very plentiful; dandelion leaves, used by the French as a salad vegetable, are to be found, the root of same being valued for medicinal purposes.

While on the subject of medicinal plants it might be as well to mention that the liquid obtained from boiled blackberry leaves is frequently used by herbalists as a blood purifier. The same applies to couch grass, while my grandfather swears by milk thistles as a laxative. Says he, "They work you like castor oil," which is well to know if one has indulged too freely in the wild Jack-apples obtainable in the Black Gin 'Creek thickets.

In the vegetable line, nettles can be used for soup; bracken tops have been likened to asparagus, but you needn't

put much faith in that being true. The person who gave birth to that statement was probably delirious from starvation. The soft white part of grass-tree shoots is quite edible, and has been known to save an explorer from starvation for some weeks.

One of the most delicate dishes I can suggest, in all truth, is mushrooms and periwinkles cooked in seawater. The beauty of this mess is that it can't be spoilt, either in taste or appearance, by the addition of anything else you may care for.

Before I leave this fascinating subject of food I must say a word or two about our native fruits.

Perhaps the best known are blackberries; but we also have wild strawberries, which thrive luxuriantly in National Park; wild raspberries—not so plentiful, but possessing more flavour, lillipillis, geebung, five-corners, ground-berries, and pigeon-berries, which are parasitic growths of the ti-tree.

Dreams of childhood gastronomic happiness invariably turn to pigeon-berries and plum-pudding grass, which we consumed in vast quantities, spending half an afternoon gathering a paperbag full that we might have half-an-hour's gorgeous gorge in bed that night.

Ah well, a man is only as old as his stomach, and if he can still enjoy such puerilities he is still young. Here's hoping you all stay young.

# A GLORIOUS FAILURE

## THE UNCONQUERED HEIGHTS OF ARETHUSA FALLS

by Dorothy English  
*from the Bushwalker Annual - 1938*

OUR first attempt to storm the Arethusa heights took place in October when eight of us set out, encumbered with fifty ft of rope, hope in our

An indefinite track following the creek soon petered out in a tangle dense river growth, so we bore up the hill on our right till we reached higher ground where the tree-line virtually ceased as it met the rock canyon wall.

For half a mile a wallaby track followed around a somewhat crumbly ledge hardly more than a foot or two wide in parts, then came to sudden dead stop on the wall of the precipice, and we found ourselves under the spray of a sixty foot tumble of water—Arethusa Falls. Above our heads, with the branches of the lower one swaying just within reach, grew two small stunted bushes, distorted in their growth by the impact of many floods and the fact that they relied for sustenance on mere handful or so of soil strewn in several small niches and crevice in the cliff face. We tested these very gingerly,

for if they had pull away in our hands it would have been good-bye. But they held our weight, so one by one the packs and the party were pulled and pushed till we all stood on the slippery rock level from which the waterfall to its leap into the valley below.



hearts, a map, and various superfluous necessities in the shape of eating and sleeping equipment.

On a red-hot Sunday morning we left our camp close to the junction of Blue Gum track with the Rodriguez-Pass-Grand Canyon round tour and headed up the valley towards the Fal

## Breasting The Current

We were now in a high rocky gorge through which the water roared in that we had to yell to make ourselves heard. A little reconnoitring soon disclosed the fact that it would be easier to proceed up the watercourse rather than to attempt the side wall, although the former proceeding involved some exciting swimming. By means of some smart manipulation of the rope we managed to slide the packs down from a higher ledge of rock to the lower level where our swim would bring us out. Then the whole party took to the water and surged up current like a herd of cattle

There was another waterfall at the end of this section, some six or seven feet in height, but a hasty examination of this showed us that an easier means of getting up must be sought. "It's a pity we're not salmon," gurgled the half-drowned leader of the vanguard, bobbing up and down in the foam, semi-dazed by the impact of water.

Some four feet up the dark rock wall was a neat circular depression like a plughole with the plug removed, and attention was directed to this as being the only other possible way out. To step into a depression four feet up a vertical wall is difficult enough on terra firma, but when the take-off is an unstable fluid and all the mob around are treading water amid hurling bright remarks about to the tune of "Stick to it! After all, you can only break your leg," well, the task is more than doubly difficult. It speaks very well for the whole party that they all did get up at last. Then we shouldered packs and continued our way, but gingerly

sliding over the slippery rock and making a handrail with the rope when necessary all of us more or less wet and somewhat chilly, with the roar of the water continually dinning in our cars.

## A Gloomy Canyon

The walls of the canyon now closed in till they were hardly more than fifteen yards apart and almost touching overhead, thus closing out the light of day so that we went in an eerie gloom, climbing over huge boulders, sliding 1 foot by foot up slippery waterways, squeezing and creeping under rock ledges, snaking along in a fine powdering of rock sand that had lain undisturbed for centuries. In some places it was necessary to swim, floating our packs before us wrapped in ground-sheets to keep the water out.

We might have gone ten miles or we might have gone less than half a mile—all sense of time and distance was forgotten in the din of many waters and the feeling of being the only people left in the world, and above all the conviction that we must go on—go on, finding a way to surmount all obstacles that might bar our progress.

It came as a rather demoralizing shock, then, when one of the party suddenly announced the time to be three o'clock. We now realized that we were chilled to the marrow, and hungry too, having eaten nothing since breakfast at 7 a.m., being too engrossed in the hazards of the trip to think of dinner. When we found ourselves up against a forty foot sheer wall of rock so smoothly polished that even a lizard would not find a foot-

hold there, and over which a waterfall, passing through a cleft in the rock, hurled itself into a deep pool below, we decided to call it a glorious failure and retrace our steps, vowing to return again in the near future as no mere waterfall was going to give us best.

## **A Second Attempt**

That was some months ago.

Early spring ripened into mid-summer and the hot sun warmed the icy mountain creeks—a decided advantage when most of the day is to be spent swimming in a dark, sunless gorge. In the interim, also, several members of the original party had been mountaineering in New Zealand and, rightly or wrongly, were thought to have improved in climbing technique.

So another assault on the unassailable was planned. We were to be a smaller, and therefore less unwieldy party, and planned to travel light, to the extent of carrying no superfluous clothes or cooking utensils and discarding tents and sleeping bags in favour of the Sydney Morning Herald.

Jack Debert and Gordon Smith left on the Friday night for Katoomba with the intention of exploring downstream from Minnehaha Falls as far as possible on the Saturday, and they were to return and meet Bert Whillier and me at the Arethusa Falls camp on Saturday night. The next morning we would retrace our previous route with a minimum of lost time, and the added advantage of knowing what to expect between the farthest point we had reached in the Gorge, and Minnehaha Falls.

We had already been informed that

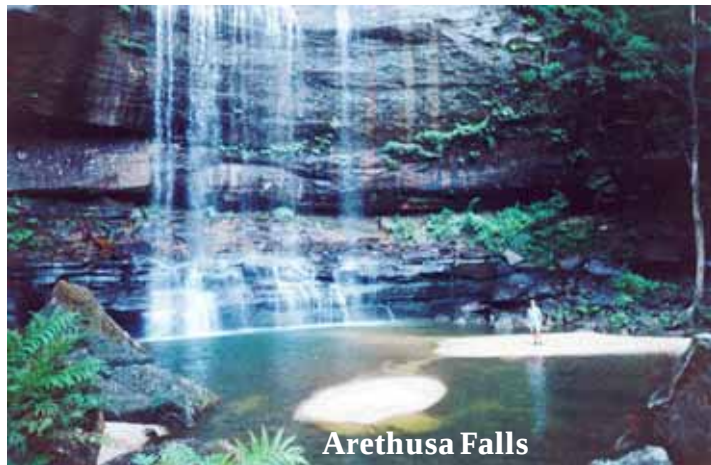
the Rover Ramblers had put this trip down on their programme for the same week-end, but were rather unprepared for the zeal with which their members patronized official walks—there were no less than thirteen camped at the Arethusa Falls campsite, all ready and eager for the morrow's doings. As there was no sign of Gordon and Jack, Bert and I amalgamated with the little boy scouts' party, and soon after 7 a.m. next morning we broke camp and proceeded up the valley.

If it had been a long business getting eight of us up the first waterfall, you can imagine what it was like getting fifteen up, but we had great fun. The whole fifteen surmounted the first water hazard in goodly style, despite the fact that one or two of the young lads could not swim. They were given scoutly assistance by their comrades till we all stood re-united on the other side.

Realizing that it would take more time than we had at our disposal to shepherd such an enormous party further up the gorge we decided to try our luck up the left hand wall of the canyon. A display of spider-monkey tactics, plus a very satisfactory manipulation of the rope and all the mob sprawled among their packs on a damp ferny slope some hundred feet up the canyon wall. A sally further upstream proved fruitless, so we were obliged to turn back on our tracks, as it were, but on a higher level, and follow along the rocky cliff face. Here we found a pleasant little tree, some forty feet high, which swayed out from the side of the cliff on its eight inch diameter trunk. With the aid of this tree we scrambled and hauled our



packs up the cliff face. This operation took much time, and one of the lads had the misfortune here to lose hold on his pack, which dropped right back into the water in the canyon below. It was retrieved by dint of much effort, and we continued upwards. It was now ten o'clock. Someone suggested he had heard shouts down below—possibly Gordon and



Jack, but being uncertain on the subject we forgot the matter forthwith.

### **Still More Hazards**

Rounding a ledge we found ourselves in another canyon, equal in hazards to the one below. To cut a long story short, we followed the same crawling, swimming, clambering, sprawling, snake-like tactics here, and about three o'clock gained the flat heights of the tableland. It was raining a fine mountain drizzle; we were wet through and hungry, so when we heard renewed shouts in the gorge, proving beyond doubt the presence of Jack and Gordon, we merely marvelled that the voices still seemed to come from the same place as they had at ten o'clock, then shouted a hearty "good-bye" and departed, catching a

train home about five o'clock. The next day we heard from Gordon and Jack that they had got down the canyon from Minnehaha Falls for quite a long distance. Then rather than retrace their footsteps, they camped and continued down on the Sunday morning, hoping to meet us coming up. They were stopped, however, by the canyon floor dropping away into a

waterfall chute some sixty feet high, so here they stopped and yelled. Then they went away, to return later and yell again, but finding that Bertie and the Englishberg and the drove of little boy scouts did not materialize they called it a day and

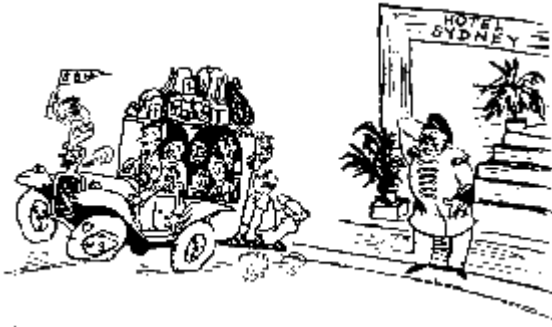
went home.

Thus ended the second attempt on Arethusa Falls to Minnehaha Fall via the waterways. You will see that it has not yet been done. The little boy scouts have done something just as good (or perhaps better), in their achievement, and the Bushwalkers have done the gorge upstream to a certain spot which we shall call X, and downstream to a certain spot which may or may not be X, but the original course has eluded us a second time. David Stead has seen fit to include it on the official S.B.W. Walks Programme for next year. All those innocents who think to attend this walk, expecting it to be just an ordinary creek-bed trip, be warned!

## The Rock-Climbing Section Of The Sydney Bushwalkers

*By Dot English (Sydney Bush Walkers).*

, This Section just seemed to appear out of the blue, as It were. Somebody said, "Do you know anything about a Rock-Climbing section in this Club?" and a number of us gathered together



answered, "Everything . . . We're IT," and Marie Byles pricked up her ears in excitement and donated a practically brand new mountaineering rope with red-white-and-blue stripes woven through it as a hallmark of its excellence, and asked us to write up some of our major climbs for THE ANNUAL, and we were besieged on all sides by questions as to our doings so that our consciences began to get a little uneasy and we thought "Cripes, what have we done to deserve this? The only thing for it is to go out and climb some rocks, or we stand a good chance of being branded impostors."

Accordingly an Inaugural Meeting was guiltily called and invitations were quietly scattered around among those likely to be interested, to such-good purpose that no fewer than ??? turned up for our first trip. The picture

below shows the party, together with packs and ropes stacked aboard the "Flying Frigidaire" (or "Criminal Coach"~--use whichever term you think most fitting), leaving from outside the main entrance of the Hotel Sydney, bound for Katoomba. The gentleman in the gold braid doesn't know whether he ought to call the police or just take it lying down.

Another respectable car came with us, to lighten the load on the faithful Frigidaire, and after a most eventful journey through Katoomba and down the Dark Road, and a night spent on the one hand in a stable with a racehorse, and on the other in a ditch where a puncture caused a forced landing, the two cars eventually converged at a point about half a mile above Carlon's where the road terminates. Here we had breakfast and then set out on the Big Adventure.

But I am not going into any detailed description of our climbing -it's one of those things you don't talk about, like Love or a pain in the stomach, which must be experienced to be understood. If you are a real lover of the gentle art of mountaineering the accompanying 'picture will suffice to thrill you with joy and exultation, and if you are not a mountaineer all the descriptive verbiage in the world will fail to bring any answering response from your cold hearts.

This from the Rock-Climbing Section.You can come with us if you like.

# TO THE HIGH HILLS.

by Dot. English.

(The Sydney Bush Walkers and the N.Z. Alpine club.)



There are recrea-  
tions and recrea-  
tions. For myself, I  
would rather  
walk. I went  
horse-riding last  
week-end. Next

time I shall walk-you can't beat walking as an exercise. For nights I have tossed and turned in bed and groaned in spirit. Instead of drugging my insomnia by counting sheep, I recount the name of every individual muscle in my body and ascertain whether it is stiff and sore. It is! No thanks; keep your horse. I'd rather walk !

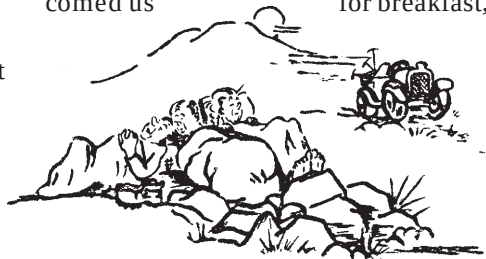
Now bushwalking, the summer bonum of all sports in Australia, becomes mountaineering in New Zealand for the simple reason that, to make any headway in the dense, waterlogged forests, you would need a road gang armed with axes, spades, and mattocks, and backed up by a bulldozer and a steam-roller or two, and that, to anyone other than an alderman, is clearly impracticable. But on the mountains you have clear going, even though it be nearer the vertical than the horizontal, and the despised vegetable dies before it is born rather than contend with the unsympathetic, icy vastness of a superior world.

Speaking of mountains brings me to my subject-Malte Brun, the object of our aspirations last Easter. The name "Malte Brun," while it conveys practi-

cally nothing to a stranger, save, perhaps, a nebulous groping into his elementary French grammar days, to the New Zealand climber conjures up a vision of over 10,000 feet of clean, red, reliable rock, the best of all God's stones. The fact that Malte is situated in the Mount Cook district and thus consorts with the proud, snowy aristocracy of Sefton, Tasman, Dampier, The Minarets, and even Cook itself, decided us to spend our holiday in real climbers' country.

Leaving Dunedin by car on the Thursday evening, our party of three traveled Mount Cook-wards all through the night. There was a brief respite of four hours when we crawled into our eiderdown bags and refreshed the body with sleep on a pile of boulders by the roadside-actually the best camp-site offering, as the whole plain for miles around was a fair representation of the Gibber Desert.

First light saw us on our way again. Mount Cook Hermitage welcomed us for breakfast,



after which, loaded down to Plimsoll mark, we set out on the twenty-mile plug up the heaped moraine rocks and hummocky ice of Tasman Glacier to De la Beche Hut, which was to be our headquarters for the next couple



of days. The hut reached, dinner disposed of, and the alarm clock set in anticipation of a big day on the morrow, we rolled into our bunks by 9 p.m., and vacated them at 3 o'clock

next morning after a terrible mental struggle. Soon we were sleep-walking over the half-mile or so of wrinkled epidermis of the Tasman Glacier, which flowed like a river of ice between De Ja Beche Hut and the foot of our "Hearts' Desire."

Uncertain weather conditions caused us to dilly-dally for some time at the foot of Malte Brun, but eventually we decided that we would be doing something profitable if we did a spot of reconnoitring, even if unable to climb that day. So we plodded upwards aver tumbled rocks to the Malte Brun Glacier, from which vantage point we gazed long and lovingly at our peak, till, fired by the undeniable truth of the saying, "Familiarity breeds Attempt," we decided to make for the summit As if just waiting for this vote of confidence, Heaven now smiled on us ; the clouds cleared away, and a perfect day shone forth.

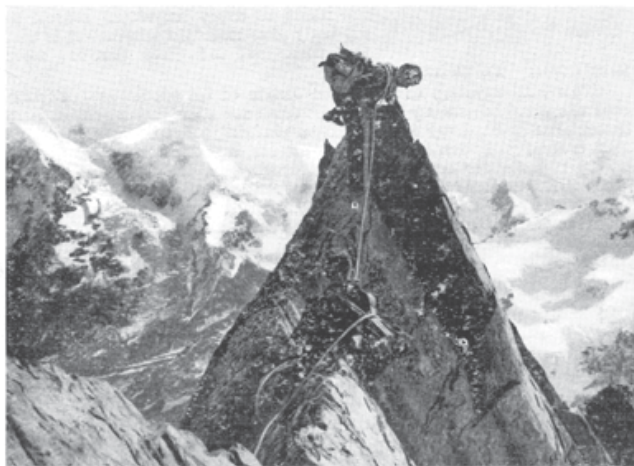
We skirted a yawning gap in the glacier ice and bent our minds and our muscles in an attempt on the

steep-walled N.E. face of the western arrete, which my experienced eye judged to be as good as perpendicular. An inexperienced clinometer might have made a more moderate estimate. But, my dear readers of conventional fiction, do not imagine that the inevitable choice of a climber always rests

between an unscaleable precipice and a bottomless crevasse ; some~ times there is a middle way, and on this occasion we were lucky enough to find one which led us to the skyline ridge. Of course, it was not as easy as that-it took about eight hours in all, which, like the laying of an egg (on the 40-hour a week estimate), is a whole day's work for a hen.

For another two hours we clambered over the mountain's knobbly back-bone, part of its length including the famous Cheval Ridge, so steep on either side that if you had to fall you wouldn't bother to make a choice either way.

It has been said by second-rate climbers that there are only two joys in mountaineering-one when you reach the top, and one when you reach the bottom. Well, we certainly enjoyed ourselves-but we did not reach the top ; 3.30 p.m. found us still 400 feet from our goal. The heights were enveloped by a heavy mist, which thinned occasionally, revealing the summit rocks well plastered with snow, thus making quite dangerous climbing. We decided, in view of the lateness of the hour, to retreat while daylight was still with us. After all, the idea in climbing is not necessarily to get to the top of a mountain, but to enjoy life (and I say "life" advisedly), as far as you go.



CHEVAL RIDGE, MALTE BRUN.

(Photo. by F. Newmarch, N.Z.A.C.)

## The Descent

We retraced our steps along the switchback ridge till it appeared to end in an impossible drop, then transferred our attention to a steep, dark couliour which, in our happy ignorance, seemed the less of two evils. It could have been called either a frozen watercourse hung on the face of the mountain, or an avalanche chute, being both. Darkness overtook us before we had fairly started the descent, and for five solid hours we belayed ourselves every foot of the way down the sort of dark, loose, slippery corridor that you wouldn't look at twice in daylight, except to say "impossible!" As the hours vanished into the dark void of night, this concentrated progression became so mechanical that we did it unconsciously.

Just to relieve the monotony, the mountain found occasion, at irregular intervals, to launch portions of the hillside o-1 to our heads. But what

though the going was dark and difficult ! Somehow we at last found ourselves at the top of a steep snowfield into which our crampons would grip. The full splendour of an Easter moon lit up the expanse of white with a radiance not of this world, and the strain relaxed.

After a little scouting about, we picked up our tracks of the day before.

Then it was just a downhill trot all the way, and at 4 a.m. we lumbered into Malte Brun Hut as the foot of the mountain. Here we refueled with two tins of iced apricots, as we hadn't eaten since the previous afternoon, and then it had only been half a bun each and a piece of chocolate. The apricots more than fortified us ; they kept continually reminding us of their presence as we crossed the Tasman Glacier to our own little hut at De la Beche.

Dawn saw three small figures moving slowly up the high moraine rocks till they gained the hut. The sun rose above the eastern bar and shouted, "Hullo! Hullo!" to a waking world, but we tumbled into our sleeping-bags and let him shout. And all day long he called and called, but we lay fast asleep; aye, all the day, because our need was deep. After our own fashion, though, we had enjoyed ourselves.

# GOOD CLIMBING

*Dot English*

*(Sydney Bush Walker and the NZ Alpine Club)*

*The Bushwalker Annual*

Today I received a most pleasant surprise – a red-bordered cablegram from an Air-Force boy on the other side of the world. It said, "good climbing" and was signed "Birtle Esquilant." Anyone thinking to derive from those few words some hint of a proposed Mountaineering trip are due for a disappointment. "Good Climbing" is just a form of greeting among the Alpine club members similar to the bush walkers' "Good Walking or "Good Camping" or the more common "Good Day!"

"Not much point in cabling that meaningless message from war stricken Europe," you might say, but for me it has provided a whole day of happy reminiscences. To-day is the anniversary of one of the greatest climbs we did in the Southern Alps of New Zealand. West Peak of Earnslaw is not so high as the minarets or Malte Brun (each 10,000 feet), or Mount Cook (12,000 feet), all of which we had climbed together the previous Christmas. West Peak is lower by 1,000 ft., but it has this incalculable charm about it, that it has seldom been climbed before. A dark cloud of mystery broods over it – secrets, stony,

silent, inhabits its gloomy fastness – a realm where even conjecture may not enter.

Brilliant summer has passed; the air was sharpened with the faint sting of coming autumn – a time of turbulent wind and sudden rain – of falling leaves and ripening snow berries.

Below the Birley Glacier just about sundown we established a high bivvy among the gleaming snow grass. Close by was a dark rocky waterfall chasm which seem possessed by strange shrill voices – cold with and icy breath that made a red fire race in our veins and queued up all the millions of fine pulses in our bodies to the highest pitch of vibrant, singing life.

We heated up a ready mixed stew on a high-altitude primus and ate, snuggled up in our sleeping bags, while we watched and listened to the high cold wind which rushed ceaselessly out of the translucent blue darkness, bowing down the long silvery tussock grass till one thought of a dryad's hair streaming down over the lovely curving slope in endless billowing ripples.

Tea over, we stowed away our things for the night, then lay on our backs, partly sheltered by the sturdy tussock clumps, enjoying the gusty



tumult of wind as it poured down the slope, bearing a smell of icecaps and illimitable snow-fields. We looked up into the incredible height of blue, deeper than any ocean, where wisps of clouds swirled and streamed poured



Dot English —

themselves in fine cascades from one blue interstellar space to another. Stars lay scattered – myriad golden points of light- and the moon was full. Birtle slept, breathing gently into the tussock grass. In the half state in between waking and sleeping I thought I was above that vast infinity of space looking down on it, and then it seemed as though "down, down

forever I was falling through the solid framework of created things and must forever sink into the vast abyss"... and I, too, slept!

There is a quiver that runs through all nature a little while before dawn, when sleep vanishes. We awoke to see the whole hillside a-ripple under the fluid wind, and we listened to its thousand voices while we cooked our breakfast on a flaring grass fire.

And now we were away – up over the windy tussocks in the soft grey light before the dawn, more alive than all the living light, light as the wind itself, powerful as a storm, tireless as a turbulent glacier stream! Oh, the joy of living! – to feel the ice-axe cling on rock and ice! - to see the timeless miracle of dawn breaking on the mountain tops!

It took time proceeding up the Birley Glacier, which was considerably broken, but from the top we could look down into the Rees valley – a great space inhabited by moving air and billows of swirling mist. We were now in Wright Col, where the snow slopes makes a graceful curve and swell to the summit of East Peak. That was the first mountain I ever climbed in New Zealand, and though I have been up it several times since it will always remain a sight that catches the heart; that thrill and wonder of that first snow climb will never be forgotten.

Passing through Wright Col, suddenly we got our first glimpse of the great fluted wedge of rock, which is East Peak. There is rose, vast gloom at its base and vaster gloom surrounding its summit. How wonderful the loneliness was up there.

The desolate scree terraces on the west side of Earnslaw were crossed, then a long stretch of misty slipped by while we proceeded up a steep, ice crack of rotten rock which led to the high Col between East and West Peaks.

A short pitch up the hard, unsympathetic ice slopes of the steep S.E. face, moving one at a time, and then we went together along the summit ridge, wind-weathered into two terraces, in a world all grey and white – the rocks grey, grey and more grey, till they were rather black that grey; and the snow grey, and less grey and not grey at all, but a gentle tone of white, robbed of its hardness. This is the place where time and eternity, earth and heaven meet. We adsorbed it in a vivid silent interval. On a mountaintop there is no need for speech the need of words – between the climbers there is a silent, comprehensive friendship beyond the need of words. They are conscious together of the subduing spell of silence, the sudden joy of new discoveries in mountain loveliness, the wonder and the beauty of it all – and that is enough.

And now all form and definition were quietly blotted out; a soft mist crept about us as we climbed down southwest of the summit to the col between West Peak and the first of the Seven Sisters. There they sat seven timeless ladies in a timeless row, and looming out of the sea mist was the grim black bulk of Pluto standing guard over them, his face stony and terrible, his fierce forbidding brows drawn together in a frown that boded ill for any paltry mortal who might think to show them disrespect. "Somewhat grisly." Murmured Birtle; "it will be pleasing to get back to our camp." And so was I thinking of lower levels – of the friendly where lots of little things – little ferns and berries and flowers – tiny gauze specks that flew and flitted above the banks of the singing stream – sunstarts on gleaming leave sand grass, and a gaysom little valley breeze marrying over the swaying clover.

On our mountain height the mist lifted somewhat, and gazing down, we saw a great, unfamiliar valley, deep dark and desolate, and wet from a fine driving rain.

"Oh Birtle, where are we?"

Concluding that this must be Pluto col and not Wright col as we had expected – the two places lay a whole valley's width apart – we made all haste through it, relieved at being able to turn our backs on the rather fright-

ening giant, Pluto. Skirting round the high rock terraces and snowfields at the valley's head we reached the next col, which must be Wright Col, unless the mountain was bewitched, as indeed it seemed. We searched for our footmarks made in the morning ascent, and found traces so faint and dim that they seemed to vanish as we looked at them, and we could not be sure that they were not rather tracks made by a wandering deer stepping lightly on the hard surface of the snow.

We zigzagged up a snow slope, following the faint trail till it vanished on the hard ice, and there was nothing visible through the mist to tell us whether this was the col we sought or not. But it was so and gladly we strode down the Birley Glacier, and so to our bivvy site by the waterfall; thence down the springing tussocks and across the long shoulders of the hills to our little hut perched like an eagle's eyrie on the tree-line, where the golden autumn forest and the snow grass met.

Night had stolen all detail from the hills when we finished our evening. The valley slept below and the snowy peaks above had silently withdrawn into the upper darkness. We stretched our selves comfortably in our Hessian bunks – a few desultory scraps of conversation – hazy fleeting visions of snow and rock and ice slopes – of a dark giant and seven princesses who

sat together like god and goddesses in the kingly realm above – clothes in a blanket of mist –

all asleep ..... asleep..... sleep  
.....

then all consciousness melts away, and a great silence enwrapped us.

So it will always be. The memories of those early trips when we went hungry or thirsty, when the morning frost found the openings in our blankets and robbed us of much needed sleep, or when the rain came through, or under, the badly pitched tent, will always be with us as we come back for more.

And so it is, today, that when new members arrive, it is not the members friend that I look for, but rather the lone walker that comes in under his own steam, resolved that he will learn more of the game that so far has only given him hunger, thirst and fatigue.

# MOUNTAIN MEMORIES.

*By Dot English*

*(The Sydney Bush Walkers and N.Z. Alpine Club).*

*The Bushwalker Annual*

Uncomfortably dressed up with everything just so, including tight new shoes, listening apathetically to the conversation as it passed from the impossibility of running the house without domestic help to the difficulty of purchasing bottled beer and cigarettes, I felt a sudden piercing jab like a needle through the ball of my big toe and jumped violently to life. As some sort of explanation seemed to be expected, I said "Frostbite," and lapsed into silence again, but, recalling the capital-letter climb on which I sustained a slightly frostbitten big toe which still occasionally deals me a sharp nerve jab, I felt a deep nostalgia begin to creep over me for the wild, carefree mountaineering life — sweating up the glacier under a 50-lb. pack; toiling up densely forested mountain slopes with mud on our pants and water squelching through our boots, faces scorched by sun and wind; rained on, hailed on, snowed on. whipped by blizzards on the heights; glissading down thousands of feet of snow slope to some rough alpine hut nestling snugly on the mountainside, or perched precariously on a rocky outcrop in a world of white snow-fields, or dropped down

among huge tumbled boulders on a moraine. shaken by a continual thunder of avalanches hurtling from the surrounding peaks. How far back in the misty past it all seemed now! . . .

We had already had a fortnight of magnificent weather in the highest part of the New Zealand Alps, and now, with only three days' holiday remaining, we conceived the bright idea of climbing Mt. Cook (12,000 odd ft.), via the southern peak, which is mainly a rock face and hence very enticing to one fed from infancy on Australian rock. The only question was, would the weather gods smile on us for a further couple of days? Ominous signs were already creeping up the Hooker Valley the day we left for the Gardiner Hut, situated at a height of 5,000 ft. on the lower western slope of Cook, in a most exciting location on a huge mound of rock called "Pudding Rock." To get to it you climb almost vertically with the aid of a wire rope, while the wind tears round your trouser legs and a waterfall splashes on your head from above. Merely to get as far as Gardiner Hut, let alone Cook, calls for a spot of prime mountaineering technique.

We ensconced ourselves in the hut, what time the weather worsened — a roaring blizzard that shook the hut to its foundations and threatened to lift it

skywards, hail that dashed on the iron roof and walls like a spatter of bullets, and snow that swept horizontally down the Hooker Valley in mighty swirls. "This kills our chance on Cook to-morrow," said we as we concocted the large and customary bully-beef stew and settled into our bunks for an afternoon's riotous reading of the hut literature, chiefly Wild West and mystery yarns. We went to sleep early with a watch on



the table and a torch close by so we could refer to it at intervals throughout the night, having no alarm watch, and hoped that the storm would abate before midnight which, sure enough, it did. At 2.30 we arose on a beautiful, calm, starry night, heated up our rice and apricots, had breakfast while we pushed our feet into our boots, and before 4 a.m. we were away.

The previous week Birtle had climbed Cook from the Tasman side. On the descent his companion had had the misfortune to drop his ice axe, which caused them to spend the night

out on the summit rocks and made the subsequent descent very nerve-racking. With this salutary lesson in mind I put a double thong on my ice axe before setting out. "No chance of my repeating old Bob's bad luck," thought I, but just to be doubly sure I included in my pack as a second line of defence a large pig-stabber knife. Several hours up steep, deeply crevassed snowfields brought us to the rock face of which the South Peak of Cook is mainly composed, and from then on there were hours and hours and still more hours of upward progression, clearing the plastered snow and chipping ice off every single foothold and handhold as we went.

About three-quarters of the way up, while endeavouring to get a better grip on the rope, I relinquished my hold on the ice axe, relying on the double thong round my wrist to hold it dangling till I should need it, but the treacherous thing contrived to fall head first, and—neatly slipping its moorings—sailed away into bottomless space. After a few minutes' lurid language, "Well, let the damn thing go!" said I, "I do better without it dangling in my way," and from then on I relied on the pig-stabber knife which, although it bent like putty and cut through the snow like a warm knife through butter, proved effective enough and had this

added advantage that it could be held between my teeth when I needed both hands for climbing.

Continual step-cutting had jarred our only watch into silence, so we guessed the time by the sun. Some time after it had passed from the mid-sky we reached the summit ice-cap. The first couple of curves of ice were negotiated all right in crampons. The final slope of a few hundred feet to the actual summit didn't seem worth the risk with only one ice axe, but as it was equivalent, say, to climbing Mt. Cloudmaker, but omitting to surmount the cairn on top, we considered we had done what we set out to do and were content to leave it at that.

The view from that height was magnificent, embracing all the west coast bush country to the sea stretching very blue and soft to the far horizon, while to north and south and east lay range after range of snowy peaks and glaciers and misty valleys. We took some photos but didn't linger too long as the atmosphere at 12,000 ft. is somewhat chilly.

We set off on the descent, quite confident of being off the rock face by dark, and so down the snow slopes and glacier by moonlight, arriving at the hut certainly no later than 10 p.m. So much for our hopes! We were still toiling slowly down the rock when the sun broke in on our concentration with, "Well, good-night, folks."

"Eh, wait on!" cried we in some alarm, clinging on the rock face by one clinker and a couple of fingernails.

"Sorry," says the Sun, "whistle's gone; we don't get paid for overtime," and with that he winked his eye and dropped down behind the mountain top.

"So ho," thought I, "another night out like the one we spent on Malte Brun at Easter." and, hastily taking a few bearings in the last remaining gleams of twilight, we continued our downward climb. Hours slipped by as swiftly and noiselessly as a stream on the glacier ice, and now the moon was with us, suffusing the rocks with its full white light.

At length we reached a ledge a few degrees nearer the horizontal than the vertical, and here we huddled close under a projecting rock in a vain endeavour to escape the wind while we held on and ate a handful of sultana and some cheese.

"How-are-y'r-feelin', son?" I asked, articulating with difficulty as my face and lips were frozen stiff as a board.

"Pretty grisly," says Birtle, still not  
• without his infectious grin. "And you?"

"Cold as blazes," I replied. "Let's get going before we freeze to death" — which we thereupon did with as much speed as our stiffening frames would allow.



There • was a bit of delay while we deliberated which of two rather similar glaciers was our one. and — thanks to our guardian angels exerting a little more than their customary solicitude on our behalf — we managed to choose the right one. An hour or so of cramponing down remarkably steep snow slopes, my hand on Birtle's shoulder in lieu of my lost ice axe, brought us to the badly crevassed area, and right in the thick of a maze of deep cracks the moon,

with even less warning than the sun had given us, whispered, "Time's up," and softly withdrew.

"O well," we thought, "we got on all right without the sun, now we'll get on all right without the moon" — and that was just how it was.

Dream-walking down the final slopes of the glacier, yawning like a tornado every twenty paces ... a sleepy voice enquires, "Do you see what I see?"

"It's the dawn?" Yes, .it's the dawn right enough.

"I don't think that's funny," said an aggrieved voice addressing the sun, still bearing a grudge against him for the practical joke played on us yester eve. This sunlight-moonlight-no light-sunlight sequence played strange tricks with one's sanity. "Life is a chequer-board of nights and days ... Of nights and days ... of nights and days . . ."

"Are those rocks our rocks?" asked Birtle, in that strange possessive attitude one tends to adopt in the mountains towards any familiar bit of scenery. With difficulty I forced my heavy eyes open another fraction of an inch and surveyed the dim, rugged outline of rock outcrop.

"They'll do," I murmured, "one heap of rocks is as good as another I suppose."

"It's not the rocks we want," Birtle reminded me gently. "It's the hut wot stands thereon."

"Eh?" I said . . . but I was asleep again; meanwhile my legs carried on mechanically towards the rock as steel is attracted to a magnet, or — a better simile as regards speed — as a slug is attracted to a lettuce.

# DECEMBER IN THE GRAMPIANS

*Dot English*

*From The Bushwalker Annual*

The Great Dividing Range runs south in an unbroken chain from North Queensland, through NSW, then turns westward and finally peters out in the flat Wimmera country of Victoria, The Grampians, covering an area of about 50 miles by 20 miles, dangle on the end of this 3,000 mile chain—a beautiful little embossed ornament on the bosom of the Western plains. They are rather difficult of access to the Sydney walker, but from Melbourne one does the trip in less than a day.

Although the northern end of the area is most boosted to the tourist, we found the south most appealing to the Bushwalker who likes his areas primitive and "unimproved." We went as far south as the service car goes, to a large guest house—Hotel Belfield—lying in the valley below Belfield Peak, then walked a further couple of miles south and camped by a pleasant little trout stream.

Geologically speaking the Grampians are of block fault formation. They run at right angles across the end of the Great Divide in three roughly parallel ranges stretching north and south, the rocky western slopes running up in a gentle incline to drop sharply and precipitously down the eastern face. Mt. William, just under 4,000 ft., is the highest peak on the Grampians and was to be the goal of our next day's walking. The

only map available was a somewhat inaccurate tourist road map. It shows a nice thick dotted line of a track leading from the roadway to the summit of Mt. William—a mere 5 miles—and as this was our first day's experience with the map nothing warned us to be distrustful. So about 11 o'clock we broke camp and pottered along to the weir on Fvan's Creek. Here we had an early lunch and hid our packs, then set off with 8 or more hours of daylight in which to do what we estimated to be a 4 hours' walk. But we searched in vain for the track—nothing but thick scrub, and very prickly too. So we plunged through the undergrowth hoping to soon cut the track before long. But we didn't cut the track, and the undergrowth didn't improve either in quantity or quality. Per-s i s t e n t struggling eventually brought us out to the high country we were aiming for, but many hours had been lost. Away to the east towards Ararat stretched the level plain. Behind us was the spectacular Red Bluff, and in front rose Mt. William looking hardly more than an hour's walk away. But hour after hour slipped away and it was 5 o'clock when the base of the summit rocks was reached. Should we spend another hour gaining the summit, with the certainty of spending the night out with only a box of matches to keep us warm, or should we try to get back to our packs by

dark? The latter suggestion won,

Knowing that any creek in that vicinity was a tributary of Fyan's Creek we got into the nearest and followed it down. The descent became steeper and steeper but at least 'the creek bed was free from undergrowth. When we got into Fyan's Creek



daylight was rapidly fading. Both banks were steep and densely overgrown offering not even a campsite for a rabbit let alone a space to light a fire. The water got deeper as we proceeded, block-ups of fallen timber increased, and by the time it was almost too dark to see where to put our feet and we had both slipped in and got wet to the waist, providence gave us a break in the form of a wide log bridge over the creek which naturally suggested a road leading to and from. We found it with difficulty in the dark and sped along in an effort to warm up.

Gaining the road, however, was not the end of the story; we still had to find our packs. Imagine a pitch black night; imagine yourself on an unknown road not certain whether to follow it north or south, and numerous small tracks, any one of which might or might not lead to the weir,

leading off it. We had just about resigned ourselves to spending the rest of the evening vainly probing down such tracks "by matchlight when we did find the one which lead to the weir. Thankfully we retrieved our packs and put on dry clothes and within a quarter of an hour were back

at our previous night's campsite and our troubles were over.

We awoke late next morning. Ira found that 60%

of his toenails had been wrecked and it took us a good hour to remove the thorns and splinters from our anatomy. We called this a day of rest, merely prospecting the beginnings of a track up the opposite range. It was a promising beginning so next morning we departed with two; small packets of lunch for a day trip up Mi. Lubra. The track vanished on the first ridge in a welter of post-bushfire wattles, bracken and similar rubbish, through which we twigged a path right to the summit which we found invaluable for the return journey. Lubra is really delightful. The view out over Victoria) Valley is wide and wild and all around the long precipices of rocky ranges surge like breakers in a high sea. The scrub, too, is bluish green, and from above looks like the rippled surface of an ocean swell. The effect is quite unlike any other mountains I

have seen. It was a perfect day. We traversed three minor peaks and returned to camp about dark.

Next day we left the South and followed the road north, the whole



bush colourful with wildflowers, the tree weighed down with bright parrots, and in between slender wattle stems flitted innumerable small birds. We met quite a few huge stumpy-tailed blue-tongue lizards, and a couple of echidnas; wallabies bounded through the bush and the weird drumming of emus indicated their presence in large numbers although I missed seeing any.

We climbed Mt. Victory through fields of wildflowers. After several hours on its long summit we passed on, and when the smell of evening deepened on the air we found a little timber-getter's hut and camped there as a cold wind was blowing on the exposed heights.

Next day we walked to Wartook Reservoir down a long hard road, detouring to look at MacKenzie Falls and Broken Falls which lie in a very deep gorge and are quite spectacular. The caretaker at War-took was so delighted to see visitors that he

supplied us with a stretcher and kapok mattress which was just too luxurious but very much appreciated, likewise a diminutive yabbie which I cooked for tea—we were running short of provisions. Hunger made me

rash and I tried to get the last morsel of flesh from the little beastie by chewing up his shell too, but some nasty little piece of it worked its way down my throat and I spent the rest of the evening choking till our kindly caretaker came to my rescue "with a whole loaf of bread which I was instructed to eat dry. Ira swore I choked myself on purpose to get the bread. It was good anyhow.

Next day we were given instructions for finding a track which was to lead us on to the range and save us hours of road walk, but after locating same and following it for several miles N.W. when our objective was practically S.E., we decided it must be another one of those zig-zag timber tracks and returned to the road. It probably did lead to the top of the range all

The hospitable little timber-getter's hut again opened its doorway to us—it had no doorway to open—and bright and early next morning we

departed like Alice for Wonderland. This is the tourist showground where every nook and cranny and gap and precipice and lump of rock has its appropriate name. The guide can point out innumerable subtitles in rock such as The Rt. Hon. S. M. Bruce, whales and porpoises and many another queer fish, but your perception has to be as subtle

as your subject to recognise them. The Grand Canyon, which leads to all these marvels is short and spectacular and very easy walking, one section—the Boulevard—so resembling a

lingered till the last gleam of daylight sent them speeding home.

And now, after 8 days of brilliant heat in a country of magnificent distances, the warm air permeated by a wild honey smell, the sky at night reeked with millions of stars, the Royal Revolver of this globe of ours brought Monday round all too soon and returned us to the murk of the City. Do I repeat myself when I say I don't like it?



suburban footpath, that I'm sure it was manufactured several million years ago -with the present-day tourist in mind. There is a wired-in lookout from which you may gaze into the valley, which we forthwith did and spotted out a good campsite for our last evening's camp. A gentle ramble down a well-worn track led us out to the Halls Gap camping ground—a well-

Catered-for tourist area where lorry loads of lads loitered and lassies

# 28 DEGREES



## 28° Outside the ANTARCTIC

by Dot English  
from *The Bushwalker Magazine* 1947

Being seized with one of our periodical urges to exercise which afflict us but seldom in this city of scrambled seasons, we decided, as it was midsummer, to spend a fortnight somewhere in that region of Victoria known as the Western Coastal District, a name somewhat misleading to novices as it faces directly south-east.

The southern extremity of this coast is stormy Cape Otway, the continent's second most southerly tip, standing sentinel over treacherous Bass Strait in which lies King Island, the scene of many wrecks in the early days of the colony. One such wreck, causing the greatest loss of life, was that of an emigrant ship from England whose four hundred odd passengers (men, women and children) were drowned. Many bodies were washed ashore, but as the local inhabitants had only one spade on the island, it was inadequate for the job of grave digging, so an appeal appeared in the Melbourne papers of the day for volunteers to go to the island and take spades to help bury the victims. At the same time a protest was lodged against the authorities who, although this wreck

was by no means the first on that shore, still failed to put a beacon light on the island.

We already knew Torquay and Anglesea, having had a biking-camping trip there Christmas, 1942. Lorne, the next place mentioned on the map, is too much of a tourist resort, so we decided to skip it and continue on to Apollo Bay. One goes by train from Melbourne 45 miles to Geelong, then 70 miles by service car round a high road cut into the cliff faces and consisting chiefly of continuous c-shaped curves. On the landward side lies a long range of steep hills called mountains, off which the rains run freely and frequently so that, in a distance of 30 miles, twenty-five rivers and creeks course down to the sea.

It was drizzling when we got out of the car somewhat sick and sorry for our respective selves, and facing the rather desolate prospect of grey sea, cold, wet sand and no place particular to go.

We had been told that we could buy provisions at the local shops, but our informant failed to mention that country shops here go in for a mid-week half holiday, and of course to-



day was it. A foraging tour of the shopping centre revealed some sort of a fish restaurant open, where we had a meal and fed 'the infant her little selection of private victuals. Then, somewhat consoled, we once more faced the open road.

We passed a couple of inhabited motor camps with the usual sprinkling of uninviting concrete buildings. Curious eyes gazed at the unfamiliar sight of two hikers plodding through the rain with dripping groundsheets covering their packs and flapping around their knees, and a twelvemonth-old baby in a sling in front, quite enjoying the novel situation

The rain eased off, but the road went on and on. To the left lay the wild sea shore, breathing out loneliness and desolation and to the right were fenced sheep paddocks. As the situation showed no sign

of improving, we decided to pitch camp a couple of miles out from the township and do a bit of scouting around next day when the weather might be kinder.

The late sun shivered out spasmodically from behind scudding cloud as we abdulled the tent low to the ground in a small saucer-like depression among the sparse, coarse grass and low, storm-weathered scrub of the sand dunes. Seagulls screeched up and down the deserted beach and

out on the leaden sea a flock of black swans rocked on the waves, caring little whether or not we imperfectly warm-blooded humans liked the general effect of grey skies, cold wind and .showers.

The baby was fed and bedded down In her hammock slung under a nearby bush, and we were not long in following suite. There were more scattered showers and all night long the wind moaned over our hollow the tent flapped the temperature sagged through the shivering thirties and we wondered whether perhaps it howled less Insistently around our third-floor flat back in Melbourne.



Here we spent ten days, shone on by a pale and fickle sun and rained on by Irregular showers. Exploration trips round the Ironbound coast, while the small one slept In her hammock and kept the seagulls company, revealed vast sunless stretches of waste waters that beat on the black-fanged shore where long trailing streamers of yellow-brown seaweed waved hopelessly with the tides; precipitous hills rising straight up from the sea and covered head

high with Incredibly prickly bushes; a black mans of rock separated from the mainland by a narrow channel, called Seal Rocks, which belied Its name by having no sign of life, either vegetable or animal Shelly Beach, some distance further round, was at least true to label, being covered with cartloads of shells.

It was pleasant one fine evening when we act off for a prow about In the hilly sheep paddocks, leaving the little elf Infant asleep under the green bush, her white hammock shining In the soft twilight soft an a summer moth. The setting sun was crowning the hills with a greenfold aura as we crossed by a footbridge over the river where, the wild black swans rocked above their reflections by the reedy margin. A soft sea mist clung to the hollows, but we turned our backs to the sea and, set our eyes on the highest point of the nearby range of hills. They were well grassed and steep, and reminded me of the green and happy hills of New Zealand where I climbed so long and long ago. From the top we saw the coast in miniature stretching away In beautiful curves, lines of foam making a lacy fringe to a vivid lapis lazuli sea which misted towards the, horizon, to merge with a sky of slightly deeper hue. 'We descended in the gentle twilight and thanked our stars for this one glimpse of the Better land, vouchsafed to us because the weather gods chose to co-operate.

Warning of an approaching LOW on the daily weather map decided us to vacate before we were flooded out of our hollow.

"And to think," I said sadly as we

huddled in the service car watching the. scowling rain, "that only five or six hundred miles north you can lie on the beach and bask cat's hours in the sun any old day of the week."

"That may be so," replied Ira, who always likes to see the whole of the picture, "but If you go a similar distance south you strike the northern limit of drift ice from the Antarctic~"

That was an aspect of the situation which had -not occurred to me. I pondered it the rest of the way home.

# A WINTER HOLIDAY IN TASMANIA

*By Dot Butler  
from The Bushwalker magazine  
1961*

Inspired by the Himalayan party that had just successfully climbed Everest, we decided that our nearest equivalent would be a mountaineering trip in Tasmania. Keith organized the trip, and in the Clubroom, those who weren't able to go were, as is their custom, giving their opinion on what the outcome might be: You'll freeze! Why don't you go north to the Barrier Reef? Don't forget your water-proof pants! Do you know how it rains down there?

Take your water wings! They're going to camp in "Snow's" tent!!! (Maniacal laughter off stage.)

Well, let me tell you all about it, lest you begin to think in terms of wholesale discomfort and shivering misery. It rained all right – and it snowed, and it sleeted, and it blizzarded, and it blew – a holiday so wet we might have been excused for growing a coating of moss on the south side, but that only happens to stones that have stopped rolling, and we hardly stopped once.

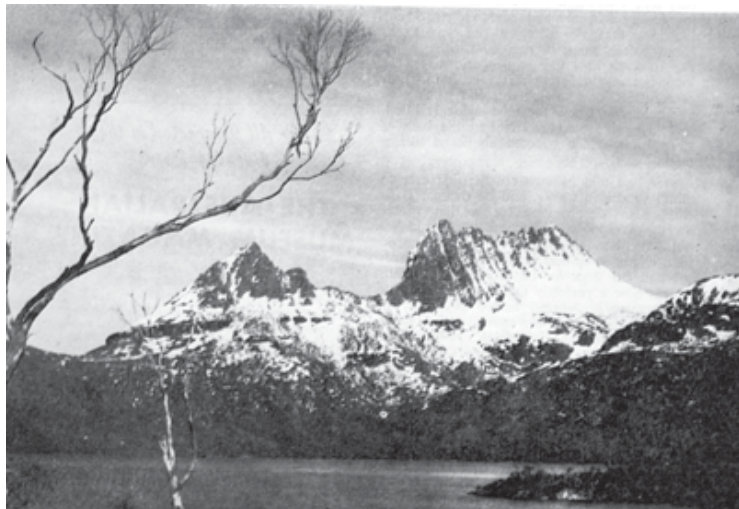
Arriving at Cradle Mountain Reserve about sundown, all prepared to camp in "Snow's" tent (too bad he had forgotten to bring his tent pegs),



we were cordially greeted by Mac the Ranger, who said Waldheim Chalet was vacant, and we could stay there for 8/6 a night. We accepted this invitation with alacrity; thus, whatever the days might bring forth, we were assured of warm, dry nights. This was a great thing, but even greater was the deep sense of comradeship that permeated all our days at Waldheim – the sort of comradeship that fills you with warmth that physical cold can't touch.

Built of rough-hewn native timber, Waldheim fits as naturally into its surroundings as grey lichen on a rock. Each year its ageing frame leans a little closer towards the earth that is

its home. Some day, perhaps soon, it will fall to pieces, but when it has become one with the dark mould of the beech forest floor, we will think of it as of a dear, dear friend. All snugly ensconced within, we slept with our mattresses on the floor in front of a big fire and dreamed of what tomorrow might bring forth.



Up at 6.30, "Snow" lit the kitchen range. We had breakfast, cut lunches, and were away by 8.30, bound for Cradle Mountain. We tramped along muddy tracks in shifting mist and low cloud, and over huge snowdrifts thirty feet deep, from which we could see a gleam of lakes in the distance. We practiced with ice axes, cutting steps up snow slopes at steep angles, and kicking up and down snow faces and over a cornice. Keith knew all the tricks, and Garth was pretty to watch, but "Snow" new to all this, was like a gawky young puppy.

As we approached Kitchen Hut, all we saw of it was the chimney poking through the drift. "Snow" gamboled

ahead, and with great exuberance, dropped himself down the chimney. The next thing we hear is a wail from down under the snow, "I can't get out!" We dragged him out, and as it was only eleven o'clock, decided to go and climb Little Horn, a sharp splinter of rock separated by a gap from the northeast end of Cradle Mountain.

For a couple of hours we wallowed waist-deep through snow, which lay lightly on the low scrub at the base of Cradle. Imagine a howling gale, a snowstorm, and us, all aiming for the one target. It was a tie; we all reached the gap

at the same time. An icy blast hit us. We put our heads down and made haste for the sheltered lee of Cradle. Here we ate our lunch standing up, stamping our wet feet in the snow, and trying to warm them.

Although it didn't look far to the summit of Little Horn, we decided we were too wet and cold and uncomfortable for any more, so wallowed back to Kitchen. "Ha!" said the weather, "I was only fooling you." The wind promptly dropped, it stopped snowing, and out came the sun. Well, wasn't this mighty! The homing pigeons about faced and headed for Cradle again. Only Keith was a bit dubious about all this, and when we

started the familiar sinking-to-the-waist progression all over again, he decided he had had enough, so returned to Kitchen Hut.

When we others got on to the steep slope of the mountain, the surface was harder, and instead of sinking, we now had to kick steps up the snow couloir. The summit ridge was well plastered, and on the sheltered side of the mountain were deep snow faces. We swung along with rising excitement, and at last reached the summit cairn. "Well," said Garth, quoting Hillary, "We knocked the bastard off." Said I, continuing the quotation, "The occasions seems to call for more than a formal handshake," so we put our arms round each others' shoulders and jumped up and down on the summit of our own little Everest-three small figures under the sky and all the world was ours.

There were photographs to be taken while the sun lit up the snowy peaks and shining lakes, then the mist came sweeping over and we began the descent. It was great fun glissading down the steep snow slopes, and so back to Kitchen Hut. Inside the hut, Keith had worn a deep circular track in the snow that had drifted inside, as he stamped round for several hours, waiting for us to return. We pulled him out through the chimney, and then followed our trodden tracks over the snowfields towards home.

In the deepening twilight our eyes followed down Marion's Track, over the button grass flat with it meandering stream to the dark fringe of beech forest, where Waldheim nestled in its nest of trees, a white column of smoke drifting upwards-good old Mac had

lit the fire for us, and that meant hot water for baths. While still floundering through the button grass swamp, we drew straws to see who would have first bath, and Keith was the lucky winner.

Home at last. While Keith filled the bathroom up with steam, we others set about getting the tea ready. Keith had done a mighty job catering for this party; we had everything. Did we need rice and cabbage for "Snow's" Foo Chow-it was there. Did we need celery, apple, onion, for our stuffed grouse-again, these were all available. That night we fed well, then sat in front of a big fire, our wet clothes draped all around to dry out, and listened while Garth read what was to be our nightly serial, "The Day of the Triffids."

Outside, the possums scuffled about in the brown, damp leaves, the moon stole over the snowy stillness, and when at length it peeped through the skylight, it saw us all sound asleep in front of the fire.

Next day, we were hit by a low, despite a favourable weather forecast. We looked out the kitchen window to see Mac's wallabies patiently bearing the continuous rain and wind, but we stayed inside and set our hands to some fancy cooking. Keith made a super chocolate icing cake; I made a couple of baked puddings; and "Snow's" piece de resistance was a marvelous piece of conglomerate called Foo Chow. But after a late breakfast, could we do it justice? It seemed a pity to have no appetite for all this luxury food, but it also seemed a pity to go out for some exercise and get our only outdoor clothes drenched

again after spending all night drying them out. The problem was solved for me by putting on my boots and Speedo swim costume, and hurtling out into the gale for a run. Down the road to the four-mile signpost and back through snow and sleet did something for the appetite, and speaking for myself, I can say lunch was a good meal. Garth and "Snow" went out later to work off the effects with a walk to Dove Lake, and Keith took his exercise vicariously by reading South Col.

Looking out the window hopefully next morning, what do we see? More rain, wind and falling snow. But did that deter us after yesterday's day of sloth? No, and we set out to reconnoiter the cirque which holds Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff together. Down and over the little stream, where a poor washed-out wombat peered about with misty nocturnal eyes vainly trying to find shelter under the footbridge, then up Marion's Track to the snowfields. And here we stepped into a strange world of cotton wool fog. In the windless silence we followed our faintly showing tracks of the preceding days, being grateful to Garth for having sunk in so deep and so often, thus verifying the route. Occasional glimpses of snow poles also helped.

At Kitchen Hut we again got into an area of wind that dispersed the mist somewhat, and encouraged us to continue on towards the cirque and Barn Bluff. We battled along knee deep in drifts at the base of Cradle, which looked huge and like the West Peak of Mt Earnslaw (NZ) through the driving snow. A gale force wind,

shouting at our backs, pushed us along and filled the air with icy drift. "It's going to be hell when we turn around," was at the back of my thoughts all the while. At last we came to a small thicket of trees where we hoped to have lunch, but there was no shelter from the wind, so we didn't even try to get out our food, but decided to return to Kitchen to eat. And so we turned our faces into the sweeping fury of the blizzard. The blinding drift froze up our nostrils so we couldn't breathe. By pulling our goggles low, closing up our parka hoods, and breathing warm air from the mouth into the hood, our nostrils thawed out and we fought our way back, half blinded, our parkas and ground sheets whipping madly round us with whiplash cracks that echoed like bullet shots past our ears.

Back in comparative calm of Kitchen Hut, somewhat chastened by our experience in the storm, we hardly felt like eating. Waldheim was calling... Hot baths! Warm fires! Dry clothes! Ah... The late sun shivered through a break in the scudding clouds as we slopped our way back, water trickling down between singlet and skin, sodden pants clinging to our knees making walking difficult. We wriggled our toes in the icy mush in our boots. Being dry was hardly a memory now. We sidetracked to have a look at Crater Lake. We were having a little argument with "Snow" as to whether we could get wetter than wet, and Garth was getting all technical about detergents. "Snow" didn't think it was possible. As he gestulated to drive home his point, he slipped into the lake. He emerged the colour of



pumice.

Whether he was wetter than wet, he didn't say, and it would have been unkind of us to ask, but he was certainly clod. He shot of like a rocket for home and a hot bath. We followed, and before long we were savouring the luxury of being warm and dry. We took it in turns reading out a chapter



each of our serial till tea time (that was the night we had stuffed grouse and baked vegetables), then found the suspense was getting so great we had to read on after tea till 10.30. In spite of our day's exertions we felt reluctant to go to bed, so we sat talking till 1am.

We woke at 9am. Snowing and high wind. We left late at about 11, but that didn't worry us; we felt by now we had got the measure of the weather – bad in the mornings, tending to clear

by midday. Mac had given us the key and rowlocks of the boat at Dove Lake. We clambered round the walls of the flooded boathouse and inside, to find the boat half submerged. We put things shipshape and pushed out, getting our feet good and wet in the process. Who cares; what are dry feet anyway?

Snow was falling, partly veiling the rugged walls all around. Great gusts of wind would swoop down at unexpected moments and deal the boat a mighty blow. Rain and snow beat in our faces and eyes and got down our mouths every time we opened them to say, "Gee isn't this great!" With all these hazards to contend with, the pattern of our progress was a tortuous zigzag, and the wonder was we got anywhere without being sunk. Peering through the falling snow we at last saw the white trail of the landing stage at the distant end of the lake, and managed to get there and tie up the boat.

What a country of contrasts this is. Leaving the cold and gusty lakeshore, we entered a dense beech forest- a world of utter silence, where the only sound was the muffled plop of snow falling from burdened branches. We emerged from the deep timber, and there were the rocks of Little Horn, and there again were the rain, the sleet and the snow. We had a really exciting climb up a crisp couloir lying steeply between black fangs of rock. There were magnificent views from the summit, but there were also frustrated photographers, as it was too dull for colour.

And now we were coming down again and on the homeward run. We took a slightly different route, following a little stream strong with winter, which tumbled along its rocky course under a beech tree canopy, and so back to the windy lake. Our morning's practice at the oars had done nothing to improve our style, and we zig-zagged back to the boatshed and from



there ran back to Waldheim to warm up. Then followed the daily procedure of wringing out our sopping clothes and draping them round the fires to dry. A hot bath, dry clothes, and lunch by a big fire at 4pm, a session of Triffids, and life was a grand affair.

We had given up expecting fine weather, so we were pleasantly surprised when we woke late on Saturday morning to a reasonably calm day. We got out to Kiychen about 12 o'clock (by now you have guessed Kitchen Hut is the hub of most of our mountain climbs), and decided on a traverse of Cradle.

A lovely day. Ours the joy of climbing to a mountain top; to gaze over a world of wonder and delight; to

dream unutterable things and try to put them in words; to feel the fresh, keen air on our faces and the blood tingling warmly in our veins... We returned to Waldheim walking on air.

And there we met Gawd.

He had just come up for the weekend. Gawd was a depressing type, to whom the world was weary, flat, stale and uninspiring.

The corners of his mouth drooped in a cureless pessimism. His every word was a blasphemy. He said he wouldn't belong to a club and be ordered about. He said there was nothing good about Waldheim – its foundations, the original tree

stumps, were perishing of wet rot; the kitchen annex should have never been built; the hot water system was useless. He said dear old Laz Pura, who had perished from exposure near Kitchen Hut some years previously, intending to commit suicide, else why had he signed the visitor's book "L. Pura late SBW." We edged away from him as from a disease, and had our tea when he left the kitchen.

And now its Sunday – our last day. We plan to climb Barn Bluff, and be back to catch a taxi out to Sheffield at 6pm. Gawd said, "Don't be too utterly ridiculous; it can't be done!" We woke and got up at dawn and were away about 1-½ hours later. With hard snow to walk on, we reached Kitchen

in an hour – less than half the time previously taken – and then round the base of Cradle to the cirque. Soon a dense mist enveloped everyone as we groped our way along between snow poles. After a time there were no more snow poles to guide us, and the wind howling in the right ear all the time was the only indication that at least we were keeping our direction.

"Snow" knew by the grace of Heaven where we were going, if no one else did. He headed off eventually up a slight incline which couldn't be seen to rise in the fog, only felt. I was now aware of the wind howling in my left ear, and couldn't get rid of the idea that we were on the way back. "Snow" drew maps in the snow with his ice axe to show how the cirque performs a big loop, but my brain couldn't take it in. But of course "Snow" was right, and when, with miraculous swiftness the mist suddenly lifted, there we were, standing right at the base of Barn Bluff, which towered above us like a mighty castle.

Mac had told us we were the first ever to climb Cradle in the winter, and he thought Barn Bluff also was waiting for a first winter ascent. Would we be the first? Would we not! We had a little bit of everything on that climb, even ice faces up with Garth led and cut steps for us. So to the summit. It was a perfectly fine day – the map of the reserve lay spread before us in all its topographical detail – the snow-dappled peaks of Cradle, Rowland, Oakleigh, Pelion East, Ossa, Pelion West, Frenchman's Cap, Lyell, and a faint ethereal blue which was the ocean beyond Queenstown. Garth strode enthusiastically in all direc-

tions, taking the perfect photo, with "Snow's" voice following him up, "Take one for me." ("Snow" had lost his camera at the start of the trip.)

At last we left the top and climbed and slid and glissaded down again. It was now late afternoon. It was now late afternoon. Behind Barn Bluff, mighty streamers of light from the western sun radiated out into the endless blue, where a few clouds – wind flowers – had scattered their petals of gold light. We could not keep from looking back every few paces...

'I have had my invitation to this world's festival and so my life has been blessed;

My eyes have seen and my ears have heard..."

"well, it's been a wonderful party," said I. "Who should we thank for All this?"

"I know" said "Snow," and over the glowing hills his eager young voice rang out, "Thank you Hughie, for a glorious day.

Back to Waldheim in time to have a hot bath, some tea, and be packed up ready for the taxi, which arrived at six. We carried our gear down and stowed it in the boot, and ourselves and ice axes inside. We turned round for one last look at Waldheim. "Ought to have a match put to it," said Gawd, but in our memories it will stay eternally embalmed – a mansion and a home. One last wave to Mac, standing there in his rugged gentlehood, genuine beaming from his face. We will come back again some day... Goodbye... Goodbye...

