

# *The Bushwalker*

It's just a gum tree,  
Rocky Crossing walk, Mt Barrington

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*Wouldn't you like to be here?*



A tarn on the south-west Scabby Range, very near the crest forming the ACT-NSW border. It drains west down to the Cotter River. Photo: John Evans



Mt Bowen reflections, Hinchinbrook Island.  
Photo: Jacqui Warnock, Narrabri Bushwalkers



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**Front Cover:** It's just a gum tree, Rocky Crossing walk, Mt Barrington. Photo: Roger Caffin.

**Back Cover:** Double Rainbow off Korowal Knife Edge, Blue Mts NP. Photo: Hugh Spiers

## From the editor's desk. . .

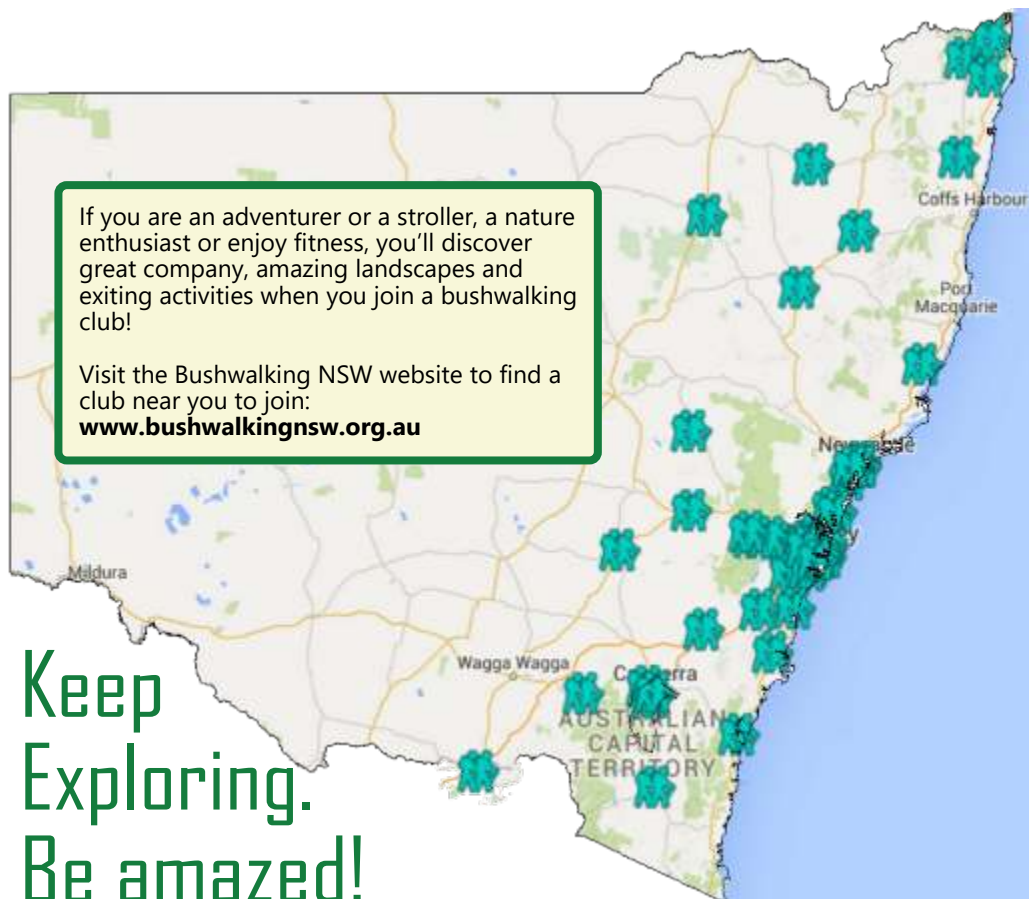
As the caption on the cover says, *it's just an Australian gum tree ...*

Sometimes, when walking around the sides of Barrington Tops, you get to feel just a little dwarfed by the gum trees. How they manage to grow that big I have no idea; how they managed to survive the rapacious desires of the loggers, again I have no idea, but thank heavens, they did. This one was in a more open area; there were equally huge and wonderful trees in the rainforest sections of the Rocky Crossing walk there. True, up top the trees were a little smaller, which is only to be expected. They get snow up there sometimes. Is nature all that benign? Doubtful: while we were there we saw several monumental Strangler Figs of immense height. They were 'hollow': the tree the Fig had climbed up had long since been literally strangled and died, and rotted away. The view up inside the Fig tree was weird, like looking up a knitted tunnel. You have to go and see them yourselves.

Roger Caffin  
Editor

## Articles for Publication

We are always happy to receive pictures for publication, even if there is no story. Send them in! To those who have recently sent me photos, like the ones opposite, my thanks.



# Keep Exploring. Be amazed!

# 'Up the Putty'

Michael Keats  
The Bush Club

This is a story about two days of adventure in the eastern Wollemi Wilderness in October 2015. To set the scene, the following paragraphs are quoted from a review by D.D. McNicholl of 'Putty Tales and Trails' by Katherine McKenzie, 2011.

'In the early 1800s, a local Aborigine called Myles led explorer John Howe over ancient tracks used by the local tribes to travel from the Hunter Valley to the Sydney basin. Their route became the Putty Road and as soon as it was opened the land-starved people of Sydney rushed to settle in the all but hidden valleys that then and today make up Putty.

The original road was too rough for carts or carriages but it was a good stock route and pack horses could carry heavy loads of goods up and down. As McKenzie recounts, from dozens of interviews made over the past decade with the valleys oldest surviving residents, it was not long after the first farm was established in 1824 that Putty residents were growing crops and breeding livestock that were driven or carted on the better bit of the road running north to Singleton and Newcastle.

One of the first successful farmers raised turkeys and pigs - and he drove flocks and herds of them on the six day trip to Singleton markets. Each night the turkeys would be driven up trees and kept there by watching sheep (turkey?) dogs and each morning the birds would be forced through a run of warm tar, followed by sand to protect their feet from the punishing road surface.

Authentic accommodation



For 30 years from 1880, the Government spent £35,000 upgrading the Putty Road

until it was suitable for carriages and drays - but it was still an official stock route. It wasn't until WWII that the road from Windsor to Putty was improved to the extent that someone driving a motor vehicle could expect to get to Singleton without being bogged or wrecked.'

Significantly, author Kathy McKenzie and her partner Tim Spooner were our hosts. It was a privilege to be staying with a local historian and even more so that the rooms we occupied was the original two room dwelling built on the property in 1867.

Before European settlement the valley was home to the Darkinjung Aboriginal people. It is thought the name 'Putty' derived from a Darkinjung word which sounded like 'Booty or Parbooty', and was understood to mean 'place of plenty.' The area is rich in Aboriginal and cultural heritage. In the early 1800's when the first north road from Windsor passed through the valley, the explorers Parr, Howe and Singleton on their journeys north all noted the lush native grasses, plentiful waterways and abundant wildlife.

## Day 1

We chose to do a short circuit walk starting west from Bakers Road down into Putty Creek. Putty Creek flows through wild terrain bounded by the Tollagong Range in the west and the Bakers Road ridge (Mellong Range) in the east.

At 1053 the vehicle was parked and we set off along the crest of a west trending spur. As this was formerly logging country it was no surprise to find cut stumps, mainly of Turpentine *Syncarpia glomulifera* everywhere. Equally, finding the remains of a former logging road was no surprise. This was a boom to making progress along



Deep in Putty Creek. Photo: Brian Fox

the ridge. Very noticeable everywhere on the forest floor were *Caladenia* ground orchids, possibly *C. curtisepala*.

Twenty minutes later we reached the discernible end of the former road. All this time we had seen little in the way of exposed rock. The forest is on rotting shale, which in part accounts for the quality and size of the trees. A few minutes later we sighted our first blocks of free sandstone; soon after the terrain started dropping away steeply. A collection of cliff-edge sandstone blocks were negotiated by a natural slot that dropped down about 4 m. Minutes later it was a succession of steep descents into Putty Creek.

Putty Creek was lush with moss covered boulders and clear pools, together with active Water Boatmen skimming over the surface. Great logs from ancient floods alternated with short sandy strands and rough aprons of water worn coloured pebbles. A delightful place.

We kept walking upstream noting that it was wet enough for Lawyer Vine *Smilax australis* to flourish. Marion and Yuri both proved to be succulent targets for leeches as well. Lunch was taken sitting on a mid creek sandbank. [The theory is the water stops the leeches - Ed] After lunch we followed the eastern bank of Putty Creek noting flood debris several metres up into the tree canopy. This would not be a good place to be in a flash flood.

Perhaps the finest stand of Blue Gums still living was found along the tributary creek we decided to exit. Some individual trees had a diameter at chest height of more than 3 m. Total height was difficult to determine but 80 m plus would be average. This side creek is home to a great selection of epiphytic species with just about every niche occupied by some species of fern or orchid. High up in the canopy were numerous large specimens of the Birds Nest Fern *Asplenium australasicum*. Nearly a kilometre long, this is a magic valley. The last visitors here were probably disappointed timber getters upset that there was no way of extracting mill logs if



they cut them. We made a delightful progress up this side creek enjoying the rainforest. On the forest floor there was a brilliant sulphur yellow fungus, very likely *Antrodiella citrea*, a basidiomycotid fungus.

When we decided to exit, we made our way up a series of ramps and slots where a drink stop was welcome. This location also provided an opportunity to again study the forest. The number of huge trees of several species is magnificent. Thank heavens this area is now safely in the Wollemi National Park. The walk out was to experience again the forest and vegetation regime met on the way in, but in reverse.

## Day 2

The Sheep Cave is one of the most intriguing Aboriginal art sites in the Wollemi Wilderness. It is extraordinarily difficult to access and for obvious reasons the location is not disclosed. The images in the cave are large and the technique of painting is quite different from hand stencil art where ochre is mixed with spittle and blown across an object. This is art that has been applied with a tool of some kind, possibly a brush made of reeds or rushes. While the first impression is that the images are of sheep, an argument can be mounted that they are of the now extinct thylacine. If that is so then the images are at least 2000 years old and could be older.

The following information is extracted from notes prepared by the Australian Museum.

'The Thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*: dog-headed pouched-dog) is a large carnivorous marsupial now believed to be extinct. It was the only member of the family Thylacinidae to survive into modern times. It is also known as the Tasmanian Tiger or Tasmanian Wolf.

The Thylacine was sandy yellowish-brown to grey in colour and had 15 to 20 distinct dark stripes across the back from shoulders to tail. Although the large head was dog or wolf-like, the tail was stiff and the legs were relatively short. Body hair was dense, short and soft, to 15 mm in length. It had short ears (about 80 mm long) that were erect, rounded and covered with short fur. Jaws were large and powerful and there were 46 teeth. Adult male Thylacine were larger on average than females. The female Thylacine had a back-opening pouch. The litter size was up to four and the young were dependent on the mother until at least half-grown. Interestingly, males also had a back-opening, partial pouch.

The Thylacine was mainly nocturnal or semi-nocturnal but was also out during the day. The animal moved at a slow pace, generally stiff in its movements. The Thylacine hunted singly or in pairs and mainly at night. Thylacines preferred kangaroos and other marsupials, small rodents and birds.

At one time the Thylacine was widespread over continental Australia, extending north to New Guinea and south to Tasmania. In recent times it was confined to Tasmania where its presence

has not been conclusively for more than seventy years. In Tasmania the species was best known from the north and east coast and midland plains region rather than from the mountains of the south-west.

Why did it become extinct? Although the precise reasons for extinction of the Thylacine from mainland Australia are not known, it appears to have declined as a result of competition with the Dingo and perhaps hunting pressure from humans. The Thylacine became extinct on the Australian mainland not less than 2000 years ago.'

## Track Notes

We knew that the day ahead was going to be a challenge. The terrain is precipitous, the creek system is home to leeches and Lawyer Vine. We had only vague information about the locality. We were quite prepared to have to return without finding anything.

Having bid our hosts farewell the night before we were up, dressed and breakfasted and on our way at 0535. At 0617 we were climbing a rise to follow the crest of a spur. We had only progressed 50 m when the unmistakable profile of a logging road heading our way was picked up. Given what lay ahead in terms of challenge we were happy to have a made track to walk on while it was available.

On the 'roadside' at 0648, we came across a folding steel chair, and nearby the rusting remains of a portable barbecue. The design of both items screamed vintage 1960s. We could only imagine that these items were left



The cave: Sheep, or Thylacines? Photo: Yuri Bolotin

behind by loggers. By 0702, the road ended and from there it was downhill some 120 m into the gorge.

What a perilous downhill journey it was! We were all rather glad when it was over and we were down. The creek at this point makes a 90 degree tight bend, is joined by a tributary creek, and immediately downstream there is a huge pool. Fortunately upstream a bit the creek changes character: it becomes rocky and shallow and we made a dry crossing. This side creek has a section about 50 m long that is an open rock platform peppered with small potholes. It is flanked with huge

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Taping down the scarp to the cave.  
Photo Yuri Bolotin

spreading Water Gums *Tristaniopsis laurina*. A glorious sight after our vertical experiences. We pushed upstream in this tributary to where it became crowded with boulders and difficult to negotiate. Time to modify the plan and climb a different and bigger spur than planned.

About 30 m up from the creek we found a rock big enough for the four of us to sit down and have 'morning tea number 1'. After this break it was climbing time, fortunately at a more benign angle so there was time to look around a bit. The most noticeable vegetation was the Woody Pear *Xylomelum pyrifolium*. This species was dominant and we passed hundreds of plants in bud. Also on this spur were drifts of the Wedding Bush *Ricinocarpos pinifolius*. Another amazing sight were thousands of Leafy Purple Flag Lilies *Patersonia glabrata*.

This whole vegetation assemblage disappeared when we climbed through a 20 m cliff line towards the crest of the spur. On the top it was typical dry Wollemi forest and the pink and white Caladenia orchids provided the only patches of colour. The crest was reached at 0907. Minutes later we picked up evidence of yet another old

forestry road. Checking on the map this road would have had to connect to an extended network and is probably one of dozens if not hundreds of such roads pushed through to harvest nature's bounty before the area was declared a national park.

The short stub spur we had been following south soon joined a longer one trending east west. The road became more pronounced and surprise, we found the rusting remains of a 1960s Holden station wagon and another rusting, steel fold up chair. An old aluminium cooking pot completed the inventory of artefacts. Nearby, there was a solitary specimen of a Daisy Bush *Olearia nernstii*, looking very much out of place.

By 1035 we were feeling ready for our second morning tea. An open clearing surrounded by huge eucalypts was chosen. The eight minute break was most welcome. We had been pushing ourselves hard and a recharge with food and water was overdue. While we replenished our bodies the map came out together with some notes about the cave location. The cryptic notes said something about searching the area in a creek.

Here we as experienced bush walkers made a fundamental error – a decision to leave our packs. All around the forest was dense with very tall trees and no distinguishing identifiers. Blithely we set off and after about ten minutes stood on the lip of a remarkable gully that dropped away steeply. The tall forest in the gully contained some of the largest specimen trees I have ever seen. There was a Turpentine that would have exceeded 80 m in height and several Blue Gums of equally oversize proportions. The fern-carpeted valley floor beneath was a mix of Blechnum and Bracken species. The view north was of a rich well-watered forest. The western edge of the gully was flanked by a large fallen rock covered in Rock Lilies *Dendrobium speciosum* in full flower.

From our direction of approach we could tell that beneath our feet was a massive cave. Getting to it was not easy: an

awkward scramble down several metres was required. The cave is in two discrete sections. The western section is about 10 m long and 2 m high and contains a series of hand stencil images all executed in white ochre on a dark background. Moisture and time are degrading these images. The second section of the overhang is separated by a 4 m stretch of wall and is larger, about 15 m in length, about 2.5 m high and about 4 m deep at the maximum.

The back wall of the eastern half of this cave is more vertical and a better surface for creating images. There are four almost identical images of creatures that at first glance could be seen as 'sheep', or 'sheep-like' creatures.

Unlike most east coast indigenous cave art these four images are organised, two positioned 'head to head' and two positioned 'tail to tail'. There is no overlapping, although several underlying hand stencils can also be seen in photographs. Also in the case of the two images positioned head to head, the head is rotated so that each image shows two eyes. The other strange feature is the presence of two short erect spurs or horns positioned approximately where the neck becomes the backbone.

Questions arise. Are these images part of an Aboriginal 'dreamtime' story? Are they post-European fakes? The issue of the two 'back bone horns' does not equate with any living or extinct Australian animal species. We don't know. ♦



Brian, Yuri & Michael, in the cave.  
Photo Brian Fox (preset)

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# Groundtruthing Around Jagungal

Robert Green and Roger Caffin

**T**he 2003 fires in Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) destroyed 23 huts and did enormous damage to ecosystems, but it's an ill wind that blows no good. There were in fact some beneficial side effects.

One of these was to bring about a general recognition, by the National Parks & Wildlife Service and others, that the high country huts had a real heritage value which was in danger of being lost, and that greater efforts had to be made to protect that heritage.

A second benefit arose out of the nature of the fires themselves. Because they were so destructive a substantial amount of regrowth was removed, and this revealed geographical features such as tracks and ruins which had become overgrown. This meant that old tracks were revealed which, although not forgotten, had largely disappeared. This gave an opportunity for the old tracks to be rediscovered and recorded by GPS, so as to record for posterity precisely where they went.

Quite separately, at first, several bushwalkers began to walk and record some of these old tracks. Greg Hutchison has walked the area for years recording old tracks and wheel ruts. Of particular note is his work in identifying the full route of the old bridle trail between Kidmans Hut and Mawsons Hut and the discovery of a stockmen's campsite near Kidmans Hut. Greg has also,

very helpfully, provided details of his GPS records.

Graham Scully of the Huts and Heritage section of the Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA) and Phillip Crampton located the old track between Daveys Hut and the Burrungubuggee River. Craig Doubleday traced the route of the original track between Jindabyne and Mt Kosciusko. John Williams located and recorded many of the old huts and features in the National Park.

Graham Scully's work with the Huts and Heritage section of the KHA is worthy of special mention. For the best part of 30 years Graham has been recording the history of the pioneering families in the region. It was his work in the Diggers Creek area which gave encouragement to others to locate old huts, other ruins, graves and mine sites.

**A**lso important was the work of David Scott. David is a conservation architect who has a vast knowledge of the history of the Park. He has amassed thousands of records about the Park and its people. Included amongst his material are copies of Snow Leases, Mining Leases, the original Crown Grants of land parcels in the Park, old maps, records of the routes used by miners, stockmen and the Snowy Mountains Authority.

All of this led to an effort to "ground truth", i.e. verify the precise location of, many of the



Charlie Carter's hut on the Snowy Plains, near Diggers Creek (1930s photo)

old sites in KNP. A spreadsheet, combining information from the NPWS' HHIMS database, the records of Kosciuszko Huts Association, David Scott and others, was compiled which included all the known European sites in the Park. Many of the positions were "groundtruthed" by GPS to locate precisely where they are located. Six huts, not previously located, including Charlie Carter's hut at Diggers Creek, Campbells Hut, Macgregors Hut and Crooks Hut (near Crooks Racecourse), were found as well as graves, diggings and other features.

One revelation was that the old bridle and other trails used by pioneer graziers and miners made perfect sense and that their routes are just as useful for bushwalkers today. They went around things sensibly, whereas later 4WD tracks often just bull-dozed through.

Robert Green is bringing all this information together in a new book, hopefully to be published fairly soon. Yes, we will review it. It will cover the area generally between Tin Hut and Mt Jagungal. Its aim is to

fill a gap in the literature by identifying routes, tracks and places of interest in this part of Kosciuszko National Park. Those routes were shown on old maps but are not always shown on current maps. The book will include extracts from old maps which show dray tracks and bridle trails, together with the GPS positions which show where the tracks went. (I find old maps fascinating.) The last chapter will feature a list of short and long walks for those who venture into the Jagungal Wilderness.

Sadly, we have to add that not all is good. Some very old and useful tracks are now becoming badly overgrown after the fires. The miner's track up Arsenic Ridge has become almost impossible. The Strumbo FT from Bulls Heads Rocks to the Dargals Range is even worse: an impenetrable thicket of wattle. There are many others. We suggest that the NPWS should realise that old tracks have just as much historic significance as old huts. They do not have to be cleared to 4WD state: just to walking state. ♦



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# Kakadu June 2015

Steve Deards  
Sutherland Bushwalking Club



Mud wallows courtesy water buffaloes



Above Jim Jim Falls

**W**e started our walk from the Jim Jim Falls carpark. The carpark was jam-packed because it was the June long weekend & the road had just been opened to the public after the 'Wet'. The crowds quickly thinned out though as we made our way up the escarpment



We camped by lunchtime

to our first camp beside Jim Jim Creek. It was a tough 200 m climb in the hot afternoon sun, especially with our full packs, & we weren't acclimatised to the heat.

This was the only time on our walk where we followed a marked track. From here on, it was all navigation by map, compass & GPS. Ray had down-loaded the Jim Jim map & our campsites onto his smart phone & he was our 'backup' navigator. We camped beside water every night & there was usually a hole deep enough to swim in after the days exertions. Sometimes we camped on a sandy creek bank or at other times, flat rock slabs. Most of us cooked on the camp fire, but 2 of us carried fuel stoves.

Daytime temperatures in June are 30-32 C, dropping to around 16-17 C at night. Most days are clear of cloud, but on this trip we had a couple of showers around lunchtime on one day. Quite a bit of the park had been burnt along our routes, which made walking easier. The spear grass can get very tall & thick in un-burnt areas.

On most days, we started walking at around 7.30 am & had set up camp by lunchtime. It's best to avoid walking between 11 am and 3 pm. On most days there was a gentle breeze blowing & this helped keep walking conditions more pleasant. Our longest day was 10 hours duration & we had walked only 14 km.

Overnight walking in Kakadu National Park is limited to approved routes. Details of proposed routes & camp sites have to be submitted to the Permits Officer for approval before a permit will be issued. This was all arranged and approved months before our trip date, but two days before I was due to fly to Darwin, I was told that our route was no longer allowed because of controlled burns in the upper Jim Jim Creek area. We could walk up to day 6 of our plan, but after that, a new route had to be approved. Of course I wasn't very impressed, because it took me 4 hours of re-scanning maps and altering spreadsheets to re-submit the new route for approval.

I was surprised at the number of feral animals that we saw. These included water buffalo, feral cattle, pigs & cane toads. The toads were dispatched using Di's walking poles. Dealing with the buffalo was



Easy walking in burnt out areas



something altogether different. There are large areas of the park that show signs of trampling, mud wallows & pig damage, caused mainly during the wet season. A new Plan of Management is being formulated for the park, so hopefully the feral animal problem will be addressed.

We found 14 art sites during our walk. Some of them were quite extensive & well preserved, while others were just a few drawings that are fading away. Some attempt has been made to protect them by placing silicon drip lines along the roofs of the overhangs to divert water away from the art. We became quite good at picking areas that might contain art, and I also had some information from others who had walked in the area.

We didn't see many native animals during our walk, but birds were numerous. John said that he saw quite a few fresh water crocs on his last walk along Twin Falls Creek some years ago. The absence of them & water monitors are typical of areas that have been infested by cane toads.

When we reached Maguk at the end of our walk we had a swim in the beautiful warm pool at the bottom of the falls. It was like bath water. Uschi, our charter bus driver, was waiting for us & she laid out a beautiful chicken & salad lunch, including cold drinks & fresh fruit. It was like manna from Heaven after 13 days of biscuits & peanut butter.


We finished off our drive back to Darwin with a visit to Nourlangie Rock with its famous art sites. In Darwin, the place was buzzing due to the V8 super cars racing that weekend. ♦




Rock art



Falls and pool at Maguk




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Gang Gang Playground. Photo: Brian Fox



Lots wife. Photo: Brian Fox



# The Gang Gang Tunnels and Falls

Michael Keats  
The Bush Club

With a crew ready for adventure to be told by indisputable signage that the road into the planned walk area was closed for reconstruction, plan B had to be activated. What was plan B? Between us we had no map of the area, however we did have vague memories of an adjoining creek system that had proved pretty good in the past. And so we set off for an entirely different adventure.

The weather was a mixed bag, overcast early becoming totally clear for about 2 hours before clouds rolled in from the south west and by the time we completed the walk there was a threat of light rain. It was cool, temperature range, 7 to 10 C.

So where were we going? Essentially to explore the headwaters of a tributary creek of the mighty Carne Creek on Newnes Plateau, west of Sydney. Gang Gang Creek has its headwaters on the eastern side of Carne Creek and western side of Gang Gang Road. This road was named by Eric Lane, former Newnes State Forest foreman in the early 1980s, due to the large flocks of Gang Gang Cockatoos *Callocephalon fimbriatum* in this locality. The creek flows in a generally north east and northerly direction for 4.9 km to its junction with Carne Creek. Within this creek system we have:

\* Gang Gang Canyon, about 500 m long. Its width varies between 5 m & 25 m. The cliffs on either side vary from 20 to 40 m. The creek and canyon were named by Michael Keats on a Bush Club walk, 12th November 2012. Cullen Bullen Topo Map, canyon start GR 401 039, end GR 405 044. [These are not official GNB names - RNC]

\* Gang Gang Minor refers to a rising side canyon on the western side of Gang Gang Canyon. This side canyon contains a huge hemispherical chamber with a steep sloping floor. This chamber is 20 m high, 20 m deep and the opening is about 20 m across. Its an almost perfect sphere. Named by Michael Keats on Bush Club walk 12th November 2012. Cullen Bullen Topo Map 405 043.

\* Gang Gang Playground is an area encompassed by the mid-section of Gang Gang Creek. Named by Michael Keats on a Bush Club walk 27th April 2012 after the road and creek with this name and the playground of the pagoda bedecked cliff line and views. Located between 405 046 to 410 035, Lithgow and Cullen Bullen Topo Maps.

\* Gang Gang Swamp is located on the creek tributaries within the radius of Gang Gang Road, 2 km north north east of Bungleboori Camping Ground. Lithgow Topo Map, 400 018 to 405 032.

The significance of these closely positioned features is that they are all subject to destruction by the planned expansion of Springvale and Angus Place collieries. The discoveries made on this walk emphasise the need for both further urgent exploration and documentation as well as strengthening the case for conservation.

Our convoy of vehicles was relocated to GR 414 034 on North Ridge Road. Walking got underway at 0906. We had no detailed map [oh, classic! RNC] but hazy recollections of very beautiful dissected country. Heading west we soon encountered a network of roads and tracks consistent with old forest logging. The cynic within me reckoned that this is Forests NSW taking out the last millable timber of old forest before coal mining wrecks the area or (better? worse?) it is handed over for addition to a national park.

As we walked west towards the main creek line, three species of banksia were encountered: *B. ericifolia*, *B. spinulosa* var. *spinulosa* and *B. cunninghamii*. Minutes later we stood on the top of vertical cliffs that describe an almost perfect arc where this unnamed tributary of Gang Gang Creek drops some 30 m and morphs from a gently sloping shrub swamp into an oversized eucalypt and fern filled gully.

The cliff edge views were spectacular, the western side particularly with deep caverns complimented with a needle like pagoda located close to the cliff line. In a very few minutes we relocated to the western side of the deep gully and closed in on this amazing sandstone needle which I called Lots Wife. As goes the biblical story, Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt for disobedience. The light play on the column made it reflect brilliantly.

To get a good photo we clambered out onto an adjoining small cliff edge platform. The cavernous weathering erosion had created a deep fern filled gully surrounded by precipitous walls: a little piece of natural wonder. A few metres on was another equally unusual feature: a narrow blade of sandstone less than 1 metre wide some 10 m high projecting into the valley. Brian scrambled onto it to provide a sense of scale for the party photographers.

Apart from this unique natural architecture the view east and north east was of the Gang Gangs Playground, a complex cliff line full of pagodas and other intricate and bizarre residual landforms that had kept us completely amused for hours on 12th April 2012.

Brian was the adventurous one.  
Photo: John Fox

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Tearing ourselves away from all this wonder we headed north to a minor cliff line that is less than 20 m high and does not even rate a mention on the topo map. It is however a point where the ground drops away steeply and there are more extensive views north down the tributary creek towards the Gang Gang Creek junction.

**T**his site was chosen for morning tea. Moving on afterwards, we were forced to break our due north journey and travel west, initially to cross a minor creek. Plans to revert to the northern direction were temporarily shelved as we spied an amazing cliff line from the crest of the next ridge west. It had to be part of Gang Gang Creek. So, like bees to a honey pot, our totally flexible plans were again modified as we hastened to yet another cliff edge.

The view at the cliff edge was another jaw dropper. West of our position was a gaping hole, an example of cavernous weathering of vast proportions. Immediately in front of us was a squat pagoda that was rapidly climbed. The view was really special. To the far left of our position, south east, was a secondary gaping cavern, this one perched high on the cliff face.

Below, Gang Gang Creek was in such a deep canyon we could not see the bottom. At best we saw the tops of very tall trees, possibly *Acacia elata*. Slightly west of south from here Gang Gang Creek performs an amazing 'S' bend in a tight, deep defile, so tight we could not do more than guess what features lay concealed. The cliffs opposite were up to 50 m higher than our position and heavily eroded and topped with fine ironstone tracery.

Could we get to the bottom and explore upstream? Time for the advance scouts to go looking. What was established was that the last ten metre section was vertically sided and not possible to enter without getting totally wet. We then pushed downstream for about half an hour, fighting to keep a foothold, and there was still no option to make it down to the creek bed.

After this time expenditure we agreed to change tack, head up higher and see



Spelio time. Photo: Brian Fox

whether we could descend at the end of a peninsula where the contours appeared to be reasonably spaced and no cliffs lines were shown. [Ho Ho Ho - RNC] At GR 406 043 the peninsula started to show signs of allowing access and nearby here we found a broad ramp that looked promising. It did not go all the way. Brian and Yuri then raced ahead as they went to explore options further north.

Their report was not encouraging. The terrain was wild and there still appeared to be issues in reaching the creek. A possible descent point to the east was then followed down, and down, and down. Underfoot the rich mulch of centuries crumbled away. The rocks were festooned with epiphytes, mosses dripped off rock edges. Then it was the great reveal. A sand strand and a fast running little stream. But that was not the whole story. The stream disappeared underground and above there was now a great tilted rock. There was also a place so dark that headlight torches were retrieved and activated. It was now real adventure time.

As our eyes adjusted to the gloom we jumped the creek in the dark then climbed a sand hill. At the top there was again light streaming in from a big opening. Then to our astonishment there was another section of stream and even more hidden amazing natural wonders. A rock scree was climbed and one of maybe six entrances to this open cavernous area as well as more tunnel structure was revealed. We were now enchanted. Hiding in the gloom was a reflective pool. Somehow a shaft of light found its way in and a section of the creek became phosphorescent, glowing in the dark. We were in an explorer's heaven.

Putting the euphoria to one side I tried to find a logical explanation for this amazing system of short tunnels separated by open areas. It would appear that at least two very large creek side sculptured pagodas had tilted and partly collapsed across the creek, falling in such a way as to provide caverns and slots where nature had worked magic in turning the whole system into a wonderland.

We were totally engrossed in our new playground and the time just flew. After deciding to call these tunnels the Gang Gang Tunnels we finally put our packs on and headed upstream with the further revised plan of walking up to the head of the valley seen at the beginning of the walk and then make our way back to the vehicles.

**I**n the next twenty minutes we walked through a narrow defile of this minor tributary creek for about 300 m. The cliffs are only about 30 m high but so close to each other they create a sense of enhanced



Looking down into the Playground. Photo: Brian Fox



A secret hidden stream. Photo: Michael Keats



### Walk Safely—Walk with a Club

height. This illusion was further emphasised by the number of huge eucalypts, both standing and fallen, that filled the narrow valley.

Then rounding a great rock wall we had another experience that just blew us away. Suddenly we were in the presence of another major waterfall. This completely unexpected waterfall on a tiny creek with a very small catchment was close to unbelievable. Checking the map later, we had crossed the feeder creek for this waterfall just after morning tea! It was so small we just stepped over it, and we had been less than 200 m from the falls. We had not heard it and nor would we have expected it.

Some 40 m high this waterfall is yet another example of incredible beauty that needs to be protected from destruction, or at least from desecration by pollution. These falls are an absolute joy and add to the number of amazing features that have remained unreported and we presume unvisited on the Newnes Plateau. No map shows and no aerial photograph is able to detect that these falls exist. We felt privileged to have seen them. Another block of time just disappeared.

Given that it was now 1300 we decided to seek a way up the cliffs and find a sunny position for lunch. Almost opposite the falls there was a nick point in the cliff line that looked promising. Up we went steeply, sometimes rising as much in each step as we went forward. Some of it was wet and slippery and a lot of it was just pure fun.

Twenty minutes later the ideal lunch spot was found. It was warm and sunny and if you looked hard to the south you could see the falls through the trees. After 20 minutes we were back on the job, pushing through *Leptospermum*/*Isopogon*/*Casuarina* scrub. Fortunately this did not last and soon it was easy going using logging tracks once more. The North Ridge Road was then intersected and the vehicles reached at 1402. ♦



Gang Gang Falls. Photo: Brian Fox



### COMING EVENTS

27 February - 6 hour,  
Lane Cove NP

3 April - 3 hour,  
Earlwood, Sydney

21 May - 6/12 hour,  
between Sydney and  
Canberra

[www.nswrogaining.org](http://www.nswrogaining.org)



# Holts Heaven and Waratahs

Micheal Keates,  
The Bush Club  
Photos by Brian Fox

**H**olts Heaven is a pagoda-filled area located some 500 m above and on the southern side of Bungleboori Creek. Named by Peter Fox on a National Parks Association bushwalk, July 2003 after his friend Michael John Holt who was one of the walkers on the day. Michael had seen 'something interesting' on an aerial photograph in this area prior to the walk.

Bungleboori Creek is a watercourse, about 36 km long. It rises on the eastern side of Glowworm Tunnel Road at Bungleboori Camping Ground and flows into the Wollangambe River. For the majority of its length, it generally flows in an easterly direction. According to Reed A W 'Aboriginal Words and Place Names' 1977, p. 22, Bungleboori means 'crooked bend'. The GNB names register records the previous name for the southern tributary, which rises about 3 km south west of Mount Horne, as Nine Mile Branch.

We gathered at the start of the walk to hear Yuri's thoughts on what we might see and experience. I think we were all already feeling overwhelmed by the thousands of



Pagodas en masse

clump of stately, torch like flower heads that just had to be photographed. The timing for this walk could hardly have been better. There were so many shades of red and deep pink, so many stages of bud evolvment; so many flower heads that were the biggest or brightest. By 0938 we had moved about 400 m. Our keenest photographer, Emanuel reported that he had already taken 120 images.

A change in terrain, fewer Waratahs and the pace picked up. At 0944 we stood on a pagoda that commands one of the finest views on the Newnes Plateau, the place known as Holts Heaven. This singular location is pagoda central. A 180 degree view from south to north looking west over the Bungleboori Creek catchment is crowded with platy pagodas, separated by deep slots, pocked with fenestrated caves, decorative overhangs and enriched with

numerous micro environments where plant and animal species have evolved. Small hanging swamps dripping with Native Violets *Viola hederacea* contrast with mini natural pagoda plantings of golden Pagoda Daisies *Leucochrysum graminifolium*.

This heaven seemed like a good spot to have an early morning tea. It was also reflection time – this entire area is

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unprotected Crown lands. Environmentally destructive mining is taking place at depth, destroying the natural water table and aquifers; the continuous whining of a mine ventilation shaft has contributed to diminished populations of most animal species; successive unthinking governments have introduced exotic tree species creating biological deserts for native species both plant and animal...

Thankful for what we still have left we set off on a journey deep into the mysterious interstices of the pagodas, down a succession of steep ramps into a creek system in the very heart of Holts Heaven.

Down in this terrain there are wonderful

banks of violets, colourful overhangs and inviting narrow gauge slots that have to be explored. A particularly engaging slot forms part of a very special place known as a Slice of Heaven\*. It is also a place of intense beauty where ironstone filigree development is

very advanced. Wind eroded caves are perforated by many holes; natural staircases have developed that entice adventurers into ever more precarious situations where each seduction is succeeded by another.

Climbing up a slot the lead walkers disturbed a Boobook Owl. It flew only a short distance into a side slot and remained there, allowing Brian to take the amazing picture shown here. 43 x optical zoom is so handy!

This playground becomes even more interesting as the southern wall of the slot is climbable. One would expect that in a place called heaven you could go anywhere, well almost. We scrambled up this rock face via a zig zagging approach, reaching wondrous heights, finding detailed wind eroded caverns and walking along fretted ledges.

It took time for everyone to enjoy all the sights and the best part of an hour disappeared as individual explorations were undertaken, photo images recorded and our senses adapted to being in heaven. When we finally left it was via a ramp to the north east, over a low spur and down into another gully. While we could have descended this gully with its wonderful narrow cleft, (setting a tape would have been required) we elected to climb the next ridge north



Waratahs en masse

Waratahs we had seen driving in from the Glowworm Tunnel Road. A combination of the intense fire in October 2013 that concentrated nutrients and a bountiful wet season in 2014 resulted in one of the most spectacular flowering seasons for Waratahs in decades.

Progress down the old access road was slow; every 5 m or so there was another

Pagoda Daisies, unique to this area







The bowels of the boulders

and later descend a spur towards the Bungleboori Creek. Before making the descent we studied the view north. It is a crowded one with lots of spectacular features, such as Angels Rest, Angels Window, Quadrant Rock, The Wall and Ascension Point\*.

At 1227 the Bungleboori Creek was crossed. Following the 2013 fire, this environment is still undergoing recovery. Large areas of sand are yet to be colonised and the creek itself is full of great fallen trees that provided bridges to cross from side to side.

Everyone made a dry crossing, including yours truly. My mistake was to go back to wash my hands before lunch. My choice of log was poor and a wet foot and a bruised ego resulted. Lunch was in the shade of a welcome overhang protected from the increasing heat.

After lunch it was all uphill as a long spur was followed from a tight bend in the creek all the way back to the vehicles. This spur provides a very easy walk out with readymade ramps punctuated by meadow like broad but impoverished platforms dotted with purple *Patersonia longifolia* and blue *Damperia stricta*.

A lookout slightly north of the slot provided an excellent site to view into Holts Heaven where we had so much fun in the morning. From a distance it looked impressive. Another major viewing point is higher but closer to The Slice of Heaven. It also provided a different perspective of Angels Window and an apparent massive slot.

For more adventures in this area consult 'The Gardens of Stone National Park and Beyond,' Book 4, by Keats and Fox.

## Names

Many of the following are Bush Club names and won't be found on topo maps.

**Slice of Heaven** refers to a pagoda studded area which lies between two magnificent, 50 to 100 m wide, parallel slots. It is within the general region of Holts Heaven, hence the name.

**Angels Rest** is a 360 degree view atop a pagoda with extensive views into the incised convolutions of the Bungleboori Creek, where each twist and turn is embellished with pagodas, cliffs, caves and decorated walls, while deep dark patches indicate the presence of hidden canyon sections.

**Angels Window** was named to match the heavenly theme of other features in this area. This single pagoda on the northern side of Bungleboori Creek gives impressive 180 degree views of a pagoda studded landscape, particularly south east towards Holts Heaven.

**Ascension Point** is the end of a small spur above the northern side of Bungleboori Creek. Other features in this area include Holts Heaven, Angels Window and Angels Rest.

**Quadrant Rock** refers to the unusual rock formation which has two 90 degrees slots and appears as though a giant has taken a huge knife and sliced through the rock, then moved a quarter segment out of it some distance. Located on the western side of Ascension Point and above the northern side of Bungleboori Creek.

**The Wall** is a highly eroded almost vertical rock face within a narrow canyon that is accessed via Glowworm Tunnel Road and Waratah Ridge Road. Named by David Blackwell, 19th September 2010. ♦



Southern Boobook Owl

## Editor's Note

The photographs from this trip were amazing; I could have filled the whole 16 pages of this issue with them. And the area is not even in a National Park!



The Slice of Heaven wall



## Book Reviews . . .

### Exploring the Jagungal Wilderness

A bushwalker's guide to Kosciuszko National Park

Robert Green

ISBN 9780994451590

The 2003 fires in Kosciuszko NP destroyed 23 huts and did enormous environmental damage. But they had some beneficial side effects. By clearing the undergrowth they revealed things which had been hidden or forgotten. This book reveals some of what was found in the Jagungal Wilderness.

In the Years after the fires six previously unknown hut ruins were found.

But the real revelation was that the bridle trails and dray routes which had been used by graziers and miners for over 100 years were very sensible routes. They are just as useful for bushwalkers today as they were to the old-timers then. Many of those tracks were found and are recorded here.

Thus the Foreword to this small book. Robert has dug up every old map he could find, with all the old tracks and routes

which you won't find on the current topo maps, and he and others have investigated them all. And there are all the old ruins of huts and gold mines in the area, assiduously logged by many enthusiasts (including the KHA) now that they can be seen. Think there won't be many unknown bits? Ha - even the very obvious 4WD track used by thousands of walkers from Blue Lake north to Mt Tate is missing from the modern topo maps. To be sure, in many cases time has erased most of the signs, but they are there, and in many cases the routes are still good. There are tons of GPS readings for the routes, although personally I deplore any reliance on the thing.

This makes for a very useful field guide to the Jagungal area. The book concludes with a list of recommended walks, from one day to many days. you could have a lot of fun.

*Disclosure:* I had a small input to the book.

Roger Caffin

Obtainable via [rvhgreen@outlook.com](mailto:rvhgreen@outlook.com)

### Exploring the Jagungal Wilderness



A bushwalker's guide to Kosciuszko National Park

Robert Green



### Australian Alps

Kosciuszko, Alpine and Namadgi National parks.

Dierdre Slattery

ISBN 9781486301713  
CSIRO Publishing  
Paperback, 320 p

There are two classic guides to the Australia Alpine region: Kosciuszko Alpine Flora by Costin et al and Field Guide to Wildlife of the Ausytralian Snow-Country by Green & Osborne. This book stands up there with them, to make a third.

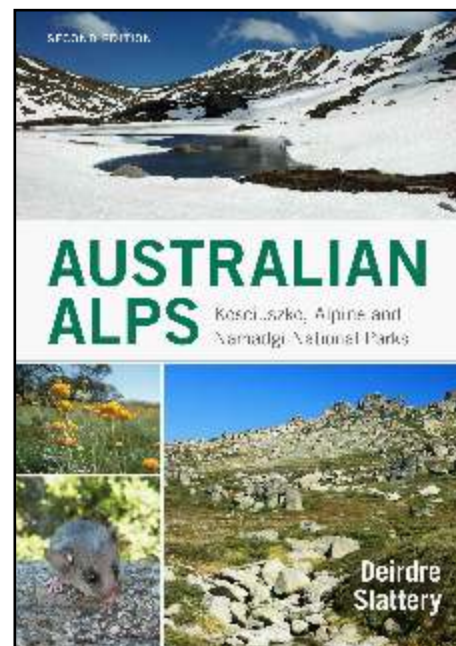
The book is encyclopedic in scope, covering the Parks, the weather, geology, flora and fauna, history (both aboriginal and settlement), and lots more. I am reading my way through it, but it is not something you can skim. It is solid, meticulous and has gorgeous and very relevant photos too. The author does not hesitate to point out some of the disasters inflicted on the area, such as grazing, feral horses and the SMA diversion of the rivers. All quite political, but all quite destructive.

Yes, you could take this with you on alpine trips. The risk is that you would spend more time reading it than walking. Or that

your headlight batteries would run out. But you would enjoy it.

Roger Caffin

Obtainable from [publishing.sales@csiro.au](mailto:publishing.sales@csiro.au), \$45



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Double Rainbow off Korowal Knife Edge, Blue Mts NP.  
Photo: Hugh Spiers