

The Bushwalker



**High camp on Farm Ridge,
Kosciuszko National Park**

**Volume 41
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Wouldn't you like to be here?



View from a ridge, Larapinta Trail.
Photo: David Whyte, Watagan Wanderers



Tributary of Tantawangalo.
Photo: Linda Groom, Canberra Bushwalkers

From the editor's desk...

And the years roll past, don't they? It seems the Gardens Of Stone series also rolls on, with each volume being bigger and fatter than the last one. All of which leaves me slightly puzzled, because any of you who have been reading these volumes will know very clearly what Michael Keats and his co-authors Brian Fox and now Yuri Bolotin think of the coal mining companies and their destruction of the Newnes Plateau, and of their compliant politicians of the NSW parliament.

And yet, I believe Michael has been awarded the Order of Australia this year!

He has served as Librarian and Editor for The Bush Club and as a guest speaker for the NPA and other bodies, but I can't help feeling that it is his contributions to publicity about the Gardens of Stone NP that may have attracted the most attention from outside the bushwalking community. Anyhow, my and our sincere compliments to Michael.

A small by-the-way: there is a new and rather expensive bridge across Calna Creek on the Great North Walk in the Berowra Valley. A very well built steel construction - on wooden pylons. I wonder how long the wood will last?

Roger Caffin
Editor

Articles for Publication

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



Keep
Exploring.
Be amazed!

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



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Front Cover: High camp on Farm Ridge, Kosciuszko National Park. Photo: Roger Caffin.

Back Cover: Camp on a terrace made in Inca times, Cedros Alpamayo Circuit, Peru. Photo: Linda Groom, Canberra Bushwalking Club



Pagodas as far as the eye can see. Photo: Hugh Spiers

Bungleboori Pagodas

Hugh Spiers

As we had done before, we turned off just past the Bald Trig pt into that daunting mass of tracks shown on the Wollangambe map and parked at 463 964. On the way up the hill we noted large mushrooms had forced their way through the hard ground. At first it seemed that the effort had damaged them, but to me it looked like extraneous damage. Later examples showed claw marks - some animal had hunted there. One claw print suggested a wombat (or suchlike!).

A short photo stop at High Pt 1032, 466 9745, and despite the great number of pics taken last week from this spot, we found ourselves taking yet more of the astounding scene; patches of sunlight now beguiling us in the different light. Northwards then, to the point at which we'd left the old logging track last time; but now we followed it as it wound downwards and north-easterly across a col before climbing towards the

next high point (unmarked) ~1050 m at 472 982. At 1015 we found what we'll remember by the imaginative title of Flat Rock and had morning tea. The scenery was staggering; photography cannot capture its grandeur. It was so easy for a projected 10 min M/T to dream itself to 20 mins.

Onward and upward - when we reached the top there was a short 'puzzlement' as to where might be the ridge we sought. The 20 m contour maps showed it by the merest deflection. Harold went off for his own short recce and found it fairly hidden by the burgeoning re-growth. We started our considerable descent of the winding ridge punctuated by rock outcrops and genuine pagodas. Eventually, after continuous photo stops, we reached the end at 1210. It was a day of much contemplation of the natural wonders around us, and deliberation over our next course of action - and this spot was the place of such latter ponderings.

I had said I didn't want to be considered Leader on this unofficial walk, so Alice blessed me with 'Guide Only for the Day',

with its interesting acronym, but I think she may have been pandering to those rumours of my having a messianic delusion). An unusually democratic discussion followed - at length, then we decided we needed even more time! So we took lunch there.

The main problem was whether to retrace our steps to the last high point and thence back to the car - after all we'd already had a memorable walk and didn't need to be greedy, or to go onwards (down) and subsequently try to find a way up. Simply 'going back the same way' goes against the grain; a round walk is always preferable. The main alternative was to descend a minor ravine to the 'ramp country' we'd seen across here last Saturday and bush-bash through more burnt remains hoping to find a way up to the main ridge. A possibility presented itself: cross a couple of hills and gullies then climb the talus to the cliffs. We would then consider 4 possible exits:

a. a narrow slot that Harold had seen last week and thought it 'might be possible'.

Such Pagodas ! Photo: Hugh Spiers



Where are we ? Photo: Alice Terry





That tree fern is going to hold me.
Photo: Alice Terry

- b.** a wide gully further S that 'should be possible'.
- c.** even further S a slope that 'just might be possible'.
- d.** Try to walk up the creek bed and hope not to encounter those small 'waterfalls' that often crop up and can be impassable except with rock climbing gear.

While we weren't sure about the slot, we were more optimistic about the others. 'Surely' we'd find a way up one or another - but they were much too far away for us to see any evidence to support our optimism. The question here was: if the slot was not 'a goer', how long might it take us to reach the last two, and then, if neither were scaleable, how long it would take us to return to our lunch spot and retrace completely? Back to car by 6pm?

Before and during lunch I think I'd resigned to retracing our way to the car. We finished lunch, I stood up and looked across at the pagodas, the ramps. They looked enticing, and I figured that if we didn't try it now we'd die not knowing whether it might have been possible. All doubts out

the window... we set off gingerly down the small but steep ravine.

Reaching the 'ramp country' we found the going a bit slower than we'd hoped because the ground consisted of sandy grit and small unstable rocks. The first little gully was not difficult. Up another rise and down... and the next was a sand-filled bed of residue from flood rains... Above us and a little to port loomed 'the slot'. We started to climb the 95 m(Vert) of talus towards it - arduous and upwards - the way became steeper as we climbed. The day had warmed considerably. The burnt foliage didn't provide much protection from the sun.

The slot was filled with ferns for the first 8 m(V). Harold would 'have a look' beyond the ferns. After about 10 mins we heard him call that he couldn't make it. You won't often hear him say that! Harold tried again, disappeared, tried again, and like Wm. Wallace's spider eventually won, and was next seen as a tiny figure waving his hat above the fern line.

It was time for Alice (who is very agile) and myself (who long ago seized up with arthritis agonitis) to try the ascent. A went first to suss it out and then found a foothold which allowed me to squeeze past - obviously she would need to give me a push up from time to time. I clambered up maybe 3 m(V) before I had to admit the need of a tape. Harold anchored his 30 m tape (doubled) to the one convenient tree but it wasn't long enough and we had to throw Alice's 20 m tape up for Harold to join them. I still had a small climb to reach it.

Then the fun started - up the wet rocky defile with tiny footholds reducing to 'pressure points'. Combination of slippery toeholds and knee rests, of sliding sideways and a couple of times losing footing in the 'hairiest' way, all the time hauling on the tape and with Alice pushing on my cute bottom. (I do wish she hadn't used that pointed stick though.)

Harold called to us that we were coming up to the hard bit! I thought/hoped he was joking - nope! I managed to climb to the first shelf. We helped Alice up. We were now faced with a 3+ m almost vertical wet rockface that appeared to have no footholds



Hugh at the top. Photo: Alice Terry

or handholds at all. Harold hauled our packs up.

I reached the tape after Harold had joined on another for me and Alice, who was further down (taking pics apparently!) She called her pic 'Don't look down, Huey!' All this, of course, was now taking place above an 8 m fairly sheer drop!! Harold had come down to help and, holding the tape, showed me how to go straight up the face. How do you walk up a wall like that, Harold? I was quite sure this was not on for me. My balance was never 100%, and as has deteriorated with time (did I hear someone say 'age'?).

To one side a few small tree ferns might be used as steps, but would they hold my 100kg weight? Oblivion if they didn't ... they did, but I'm glad nobody filmed it!! Most inelegant. The final 2 m was the most difficult and I'm still not sure how I managed it - but I did, and we were able to help Alice up. The others wanted to call the slot, 'Hui's Ruin'! So long as they don't ever have to call it 'Hui's Downfall', I don't mind!

I cannot imagine how Harold climbed this whole slot without a tape. It must have been very dangerous. Well done, indeed, Harold. I'm almost glad I was too far down to see it!

The last part climb of 25 m(V) took us out of the slot to where we rested like lizards recuperating (well, I did!!). Alice told us that on the last climb my boot had destroyed a small fern which I'd had to use as my last 'foothold' and thought that future attempts to climb this section that way might not work 'so well'. ♦



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Walking Legends

Climbing the Hammer

Michael Keats, The Bush Club.
Photos: Brian Fox

Gaining access to restricted areas where the walking and challenges are exceptional is an all too rare occurrence. This is a story that needs to be told although it is unlikely that many others will be able to do it except vicariously through these words and pictures.

Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area was created on the 4th March 2011. It covers an area of 3650 ha. This area is on the northern side of the Glen Davis Road, 8 km east of Capertee and includes Mount Airly and Mount Genowlan. The park contains a great diversity of ecosystems, supporting several threatened plants and animals and two threatened ecological communities. It also contains heritage stone dwellings of New Hartley oil shale ruins near Airly Gap. Named after the Wiradyuri Elder, Charley Riley. Mugii is Riley's Wiradyuri name and means a Mopoke Owl, while Murum-ban means eldest son in the Wiradyuri language.

The Hammer refers to an area of land located on the eastern extremity of Genowlan Mountain mesa. Named by Michael Keats on a Bush Club walk in November 2010. The aerial view is like the head of a claw hammer. Glen Alice Topo Map: GR 289 334 head of the hammer, GR 284 326 claw of the hammer. Also The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond, Book 1, Walk 1.23, for detailed Track Notes.

Since my first visit to the Airly–Genowlan mesa in April 2007 I have wanted to explore the extreme eastern end - The Hammer. This desire intensified in November 2010 when a three day adventure exploring the Genowlan Mountains failed to find a route across Genowlan Canyon. It seemed The Hammer was only accessible by climbing the eastern extremity or tail. While a study of aerial photographs showed this option was a

possibility, the topographic map clearly showed that it was completely surrounded by private property. It was not until the owner of Nioka graciously gave permission for us to cross his lands that we could even plan the walk. Whilst this permission was gained in November 2015, walking conditions have been too hot and humid to make the attempt before now. Interest by local residents Dom Della Libra of Ngamperi and Michael Mueller of Red Rock Ridge was such that we invited them to join the challenge.

Logistics for the day worked perfectly, and by 0905 the property gate was locked behind us and as a caravan of three vehicles we set off on the internal road system towards the planned ascent point. All was going well until in Paling Yard Creek we came across a very large piece of farm equipment parked in the middle of the road. Fortunately we were able to create a by-pass, driving on a dry grassy sward for about 400 m. Another minor diversion was to stop for a very colourful and cooperative Eastern Rosella. Cameras away, we drove on parking the vehicles at GR 304 333.

The timbered country, mainly Ironbark and Grey Gum on depleted soils, has a poorly developed understory so movement is easy except for quantities of loose scree and gravel. The most surprising discovery was that of an old road following the crest of the spur for several hundred metres. The purpose of the road is unclear. It may have been for fire-fighting access or even an internal property road. The first edition topographic map shows Portion 28 as including this area.

At 0956 we encountered a pair of old steel posts that could have marked a boundary with Crown Land. Ever climbing we continued to make use of the old road formation. Then while in climbing mode we came across a remarkable sight, a colourful canvas banner attached to a tree. Questions: How, Why and When. Initial speculation was for a mountain bike ride. The banner was old and prominently references The St. Marys Community Credit Union. The telephone number is a seven digit one that would date it early 1970s. A check of the current telephone directory makes no reference to such an organisation. We suspect it is long defunct.

I was still puzzling over this bizarre find as we crested a rise to a relatively flat open area. It was now 1014 and there were pleas for morning tea but this was another 100 m and another 20 m upwards at 716 m. It was about here when the road formation disappeared. For a few tens of metres there was a sort of animal pad and then it was



Hammer Pass

into rock climbing.

Generally the rocks were easy to climb and we made good progress. There was one surprise when Brian touched a butter box size rock that was so finely balanced that as he touched it, it just rolled down the slope without warning. The noise went on for some time ... Fortunately there was no one below.

Now the topographic map shows a tiny break in the cliff line and the aerial photographs also show that where we were climbing offered the best chances of accessing the plateau top. We had reached a point about 60 m from the top when our options seemed to disappear. Certainly to the north of our ascent there was no way at all. Yuri and Brian began exploring to the south. By losing some altitude a ramp was found that appeared to hold promise; in the end we shifted almost 100 m to the south before discovering a potentially good pass. Of course we could not see from the bottom whether it went but it was worth a try. It was fantastic as the photos show. Best of all



The Hammer, south side



John Fox on the edge



Cliffs on the North side

the northern wall formed the sheer cliff face of a large orphan rock. This pass we named The Hammer Pass. At the top of the pass there is a small easy grade dog leg, and then, presto! The top is secured.

What an amazing feeling to be on the top of this climb and look out over the Capertee Valley. After the initial 'wow' feeling subsided and we had taken some good but not extra special photos, we headed for the extreme eastern end of The Hammer. This location is amongst the very grandest of look outs in the entire Greater Blue Mountains National Park. The view is expansive, stretching from West of Mount Marsden near Rylstone east through 270 degrees to Pantoneys Crown. With the added ethereal effect of rain squalls on the northern and southern peripheries it was a scene not easily forgotten. I must confess to an extra lump in the throat as Brian stood fearless at the very edge. Yuri was a close second. What the picture does not show is the leap between the two rocks with its 30 m drop.

Back from the brink it was time to explore the claw end of The Hammer. We had not progressed more than 20 m when Dom held up a trophy find- a bundle of chain saw files, rusted but still taped together. Nearby we located a multi stemmed burnt tree that had been cut to the ground. All this made sense when Dom recalled that about 5 years ago the NPWS had conducted a controlled burn on top of the mountain. No doubt some personnel had been 'chopped in' to mop up after the initial burn. Later we found a ring pull from a drink can. It is highly unlikely that personnel would have scrambled up the way we came toting a chain saw.

It was now 1145 and time to walk some of the cliff edges both north and south. Again progress was easy. There had been virtually no regrowth since the burn. If the burn had been done to stimulate new growth it would have to be rated a dismal

failure. Why it was done at all is a mystery.

At any point along the cliff edge the views are just spectacular. On the north side we could trace the course of our sub cliff line walk between Point Genowlan and the headwaters of Emu Swamp Creek done in March 2013 when we camped on Halcyon Park. Up above were the amazing pagodas of Mothers Arms and in the notch the concealed magic of the Dragons Lair and best of all was something new. A pagoda rests precariously on the northern cliff edge. That is nothing unusual. What is unusual is the huge horizontal, cylindrical perforation, large enough to crawl through. The views looking east are unique. I have called this special feature the Genowlan Oculus or Eye.

The southern side views are more familiar as they are visible from the Glen Davis Road. There is the possibility of a another negotiable pass there in a notch. Michael M has done some

homework and provided the following input. "The coordinates my GPS recorded for that other possible ramp down were 56S 228586E 6333002N or 56S 228586E 6333005N."

We all gathered together for lunch above The Hammer Pass at 1239.

With threatening rain it was a quick affair and at 1251 we were headed back down the Pass. A slightly different descent route was followed that avoided the complex but interesting rock climbing. There was also opportunity during the descent to photograph several of the tough plant species that can survive under such harsh conditions. The vehicles were reached at 1354. Total distance walked 5.8 km, total ascents 500 m.

Genowlan Canyon is located 2.4 km north east of Genowlan Trig and 2.5 km south east of Point Hatteras. It is about 50 m deep, 200 m long. Genowlan Canyon was named by Brian Fox and Michael Keats on a Bush Club walk 27th October 2010. Described by Michael as follows, "Stood on the top and looked down. 50 m below between the tight, almost vertical narrow walls, the Tree Fern crowns looked minuscule." Glen Alice Topo Map, GR 273 331. See Book 1, Walk 1.23 & 1.24, for detailed Track Notes.

Mothers Arms Pagodas are located on the eastern escarpment of Genowlan

Walk Safely—Walk with a Club



An obliging Rosella

Mountain near Genowlan Point. Mothers Arms is a descriptive term for these encircling and dramatic pagodas. Named by Dr Haydn Washington, November 1984. According to Haydn, this pagoda creek system can be accessed from the talus slope below. Ref: Correspondence with David Blackwell, 27th April 2010. Glen Alice Topo Map, GR 268 345. See GOS Book 1 Walk 1.24 for detailed Track Notes.

Dragons Lair is a promising cluster of pagodas, photogenic and waiting to be explored, 400 m south of Point Hatteras. Named by David Blackwell, November 1984. Ref: Correspondence with David Blackwell, 2nd May 2010. Glen Alice Topo Map, GR 251 339. ♦



The Eye.

Mt Banks Reccie

Irene Wheatley
Yarrowood Bushwalking Club

It's been more than 10 years since either of us has been to Mt. Banks, so dim memories and preconceived ideas were washed away before we even reached the turnoff on the Bells Line of Road (Bilpin Road). Coming from Blackheath, it's about a 30 minute drive around. There have been and continue to be, road works and improvements along the Bilpin Road. However, the signposting does not match, as there is a partially obscured road sign on the right, at the track entrance which is also a sharp right turn from a left hand curve (single lane – 80km/ph speed road) into the Mount Banks picnic area track (good luck). You have a better chance coming from the other direction, two lanes and a bit of an exit lane, about 7 km further along from the Mt. Tomah Botanic Gardens. The track is rough and it's more than 1 km to the picnic area and the start of your walk(s).

There is a nice shaded picnic area with tables and benches plus pit toilet – all of which you will need after your walk(s). The northern face, or second hump of Mount Banks is grass and heath land and rocky which gives you a really clear view of your

surrounds including breathtaking views into the Grose Valley and its southern walls (we even recognised Hanging Rock away in the distance). You can see out west to the Darling Causeway and the east will be revealed if you later decide to take the fire trail in that direction.

We started with the walking track up to Mount Banks' summit. This isn't too far, about 2.4 km return if that is all you plan to do. The path is fairly steep with plenty of steps, especially the first section. Take it slowly and make time for the views, the rock shapes and flora. As it was spring, wildflowers were out in force, everywhere a profusion of the three leaved native iris, luscious purple when first opened, waving their heads about, many already fading to mauve in the heat – around 29 C forecast for the mountains with wind. There were plenty more beautiful flowers, shrubs and bushes to see. Lyrebirds have been heard in the area and the odd wombat hole could also be seen next to the track. When you reach the tree line you will be glad of the dappled shade, but the views disappear and at the summit the trig point is now overgrown. There are no good views of the

valley because of the trees; the joy is in the trek.

We doubled back for a short distance until we reached the right hand turn off that leads to the fire trail that will either bring you back to the parking/picnic area about 2.5 km from here or, if you are adventurous, turn right and follow the fire trail to its end. This will expand your walk by about 10 km return along a gradually deteriorating but walkable road surface. Once there was a water tank and lookout

about half way along but they are in ruins and unattractive so we continued along the winding track which we could see snaking ahead of us through the trees, until the trees gradually thinned out and the heath and sparse trees started to take over. The trail winds past the valley wall and there is a lookout which offers the best views back towards Govett's Leap, indeed in every direction. But, it was too windy for us today so we continued on for another kilometre or so until we came to a thinning track leading to a rocky point with more magnificent views.

We could even see and faintly hear the Grose River coursing along its way through the blue gums way below us. Up here there are plenty of rocks to sit on for lunch, which was really wanted by now and a bonus for being amongst a garden of beautifully perfumed pink Boronia bushes.

Lunch and photography over, we started the trudge back and I don't mind admitting there was a bit of complaining, in fact when we returned to our car Howard declared that it was time to replace my walking shoes. Bring plenty of water, you will need it. Our round trip today was about 15 km and a bit over 5 hours with lunch and plenty of gushing over the views and we hadn't answered the question of how far to take our party of Thursday walkers.

To hopefully solve this problem, because ideally, we would like to put on a four hour walk or five hour day – or near as possible, we decided to do a reccie of the Pierces Pass Grose Gorge and Walls (short) walk a couple of weeks later to see if that would be a suitable addition to the short Mt. Banks walk.

After lunch on Tuesday we made a snap decision to check out that gorge and walls walk. Pierces Pass is under 2 km further west from Mt. Banks along the Bell's Road, if coming from Mt.



Mt. Banks trig point – coming back down the track

At the start of the Mt. Banks summit walk – looking back to the track from the Bells Line of Road



Tomah direction with a more noticeable sign marking the entrance. We'd just had a weekend of typical Blackheath mist but broody afternoons had been with us for weeks with little result or only brief storms over our way. Most of the roiling clouds and distant thunder remained just that – distant. On the drive along Darling Causeway we were hit by a heavy thunder shower which had nearly petered out by the time we arrived at the top Pierces Pass car park. Decision time – turn around or go walking?

It was only an hour's walk, we weren't wimps and anyway the sky looked to be clearing to the west. We put on our raincoats and started out. The walk starts on a fairly decent track which soon narrows into a one person track of the type we are all accustomed to. It mostly heads downhill, with the thought in back of your mind: big steps up on the return journey. It was sprinkling but we didn't take much notice. Gradually, the scenery opens out as you reach the heath land with rocky protrusions all around. After a while, each time you reach a rise you think that this must be the top of the walls only to see that you have a further rise or lump to reach.

It's utterly dramatic here and with a dark, blue grey sky looming over our shoulder, threatening too. We were out in the open, equidistant to the walls or cover as the sprinkling increased to rain but it was the lightning and thunderbolts that had us (me, anyway) worried. No way was I walking in or near the runnels formerly known as 'track' that quickly developed. Howard didn't reassure me much by explaining that the lightning was very high sheet, not fork lightning. Still, push on was what we did – noticing that the weather was coming from the north west! Within about 30 seconds of the rain starting in earnest our pants were soaked, rivulets of water running down our coat hems and our soaked pants tucking into our 'waterproof' boots, filling them up, with no way for the water to escape.

Was it worth it? You bet! When we reached the walls we ducked behind a rock for a bit of cover, and I do mean only a bit. The rain did let up while the angry clouds continued cracking and banging overhead though we managed to enjoy the scenery for a bit before sloshing our way back to the car. ♦

Valley view from our lunch spot – looking north eastish



Looking south west to the Traverse of The Gods (traces of the light track can be seen)



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Stairway to Heaven

or Getting to the Point

Yuri Bolotin

[This is about a short side trip Yuri did while on one of Michael Keats' explorations around the Airley region. It presented slightly more difficulties than normal. Ed.]

When our group climbed to the first of several deep slots we had observed from the opposite side of the valley, I was disappointed to see that it quickly ran out, well before reaching Point Hatteras. I really wanted to explore the rest of the slots potentially leading to the top, and Michael, a gracious leader, was OK about me leading a side excursion, 'a shortcut', as I put it, to the heaven of Point Hatteras.

And so it was that, whilst the rest of the group continued on their way up and around the first slot, Emanuel, Harold and I headed back down to the bottom of the

valley in order to find an alternative, perhaps more interesting way up.

We were soon walking in a beautiful defile, about 10 m wide, framed by 50 m tall cliffs on both sides and covered with red and green lichen. I was watching the wall on my left, as this is where our way up was going to be found. One or two shallow 'no go' slots were passed by, but it was the next opening in the cliffs, just around the corner, that I had been pinning my hopes for – the big slot that we saw from the distance whilst standing on the other side of the valley.

As we rounded the bend, the cliffs indeed moved aside, forming a deep and inviting gorge, lined with luxuriant ferns. However, when we moved a bit further up, we saw that our gorge quickly terminates in a 50 m high blind slot. It was very clear without proceeding any further that it would not offer us a way to the top of Point Hatteras.

At this moment, a prudent thing to do would be to cut our losses and turn back. Ever hopeful for an unexpected discovery, I said to the guys, 'Let me have a look a bit further along the cliff line'. After another 50 m of walking, there was a slot that did not even merit a second glance. I moved on, now followed by Harold and Emanuel. Then, suddenly, I felt a strong gust of wind on my cheeks. I stood on the edge of a huge, 150 m drop, all the way down into the Capertee Valley. We reached

In the defile underneath Point Hatteras.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin

The start of the climb.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin



Point Hatteras and could not proceed any further north; however there was a small issue of conquering the vertical displacement of some 50-70 m that separated us from the top of the cliffs and the rest of the group that was now enjoying their lunch there.

We had the opportunity at this point to simply turn back and retrace our steps – a safe option. But were there any other options? A short walk back from the edge brought us to the bottom of a very tall pagoda. I looked up. It was not, perhaps, too bad. Could these ledges gradually be followed all the way up? I said to the guys,



On top of Point Hatteras
- at last.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin



When the only way
possible is up.
Photo: Emanuel Conomos

Below: Emanuel and
Harold following Yuri
upwards.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin

let me try, and clambered on the first ledge. It was OK but stopped shortly, and a further climb was required to the next, higher ledge. The ledges varied from 30 cm to 10 cm in width, and some of them looked very thin. The stone surface beneath my feet was dry, giving my shoes a good grip. I kept going.

Soon, I was some 20 m above the defile floor and at a point from where it would possibly be more dangerous to go back down than to continue climbing, particularly keeping in mind the thin edges, almost invisible during the descent. Emanuel and Harold were now following me, some 15 m below. The next challenge was a ledge interrupted by one of the blind slots we had seen from the bottom. The jump across was only perhaps 70 cm in distance, but doing it whilst standing on a 10 cm wide platform, aiming at an equally tiny landing spot, was rather exhilarating. Emanuel, who is shorter than Harold and I, had probably felt this spot the most.

My next ledge had petered out, and the cliff face bulged out at this point, barring further progress. I was standing on a tiny platform some 30 m above the valley floor, and going back was really not a good option, perhaps not an option at all. Less than two vertical metres above me, I could see the incline started to get more

manageable. If we get there, we could perhaps make it! Underneath me, the guys were carefully negotiating the treacherously thin ledges. Way below and all around, a magnificent view started to open up, reaching all the way across to Mount Genowlan and beyond.

Focus, concentrate and don't look at what is below you! Very carefully, I took a step down, onto a thin overhanging plate of ironstone, then scrambled straight up. Emanuel was now not far behind. On the way, he had managed to bend and knock on the ironstone plate to test its soundness before stepping on; he said it would



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EXPLORANGES 
30 years and still experiencing the bush



The rest of the group waiting for us, now not too far away.
Photo: Yuri Bolotin



Smiling for the camera - just!
Photo: Yuri Bolotin

probably be OK. Harold, who is the tallest and the heaviest of us three, soon followed.

We made our way above the bulge, and then it was a section of comparatively easier climbing, still following the protruding ledges, until we reached a large, almost horizontal platform and an undercut in the pagoda.

There was still about 10 m of height to be gained, but due to the overhanging rock, we could not possibly continue to climb straight up. To the left, I could see a deep, menacing looking ravine. I decided to investigate to the right. A few metres on, a familiar strong, chilly blast of wind told me I was once again on the cliff edge. I took a small ledge above the 200 m drop for several steps, where it terminated at a chimney climb, which could perhaps be done with a tape. The chasm below reminded me that a mistake here would be fatal. I was still considering this climb as being a better alternative to going all the way down to the bottom of the defile, when

Emanuel called out, 'I think, there is a small ledge on the left hand side that might work'.

Very relieved to hear that, I was there in a flash. The ledge indeed was pretty good, and soon I rounded the corner above the deep ravine. At this point, I saw the rest of the group, a hundred metres or so away, relaxing in the sun and having their lunch. We were still separated from them by a couple of very deep slots. The team must have been happy to see us too, and they waved to us.

Now, that we were most of the way up the tallest pagoda on the very edge of Point Hatteras, there was no way we would be going straight back. We had to finish our task! When we climbed to the top of our Stairway, it was indeed Heaven. The panorama was magnificent and included not only Capertee Valley, Genowlan Mountain, Blacks Corner and the distant Tayan Pic, but also a superb view of the rest

of the group scattered on a wide platform underneath us. *[I bet the relief was pretty heavenly too! Ed.]*

Many photos later, we made our way back through a narrow elevated walkway that dropped 200 m on one side, but luckily only a couple of metres on another, to emerge on the spot where everybody else was waiting. Our lunch had to be short, as we ended up being away for an extra 30 minutes.

A shortcut it was not, but an amazing experience it definitely was. Thanks, Emanuel and Harold, for once again sticking together with me.

Would I do it again? Definitely, yes. Why did we do it? I will let you, the readers, divine your own answers. It might perhaps help you to know that there is a perfectly walkable fire trail that leads all the way to the top of Point Hatteras, to within 100 m of where we had reached by taking a path less travelled. ♦

Join a Club!

Bushwalking Clubs are established across NSW and ACT. Visit our website to find your nearest club at: www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au

Member Clubs of Bushwalking NSW Inc:

Bankstown Bushwalking Club
Barrier Rangers
Batemans Bay Bushwalkers
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Bushwalking Club
Blue Steel Dash
Brindabella Bushwalking Club
Brisbane Water Outdoors Club
Canberra Bushwalking Club
Catholic Bushwalking Club
Central West Bushwalking Club
Clarence Valley Bushwalkers
Coast and Mountain Walkers of NSW
Cumberland Plain Walkers

Fairfield Bushwalking Club
Geehi Bushwalking Club
Goulburn Bushwalkers Club
Happy Wanderers
Hill View Bushwalkers
Hunter Area Walkabout Club
Illawarra Ramblers Club
Inverell Bushwalking Club
Ku-ring-gai Bushwalkers Activity & Social Group
Lake Macquarie Bushwalkers
Macquarie Explorers Club
Manly Spit Bushwalking Club
Manning River Canoe Club
Mountain Devils Bushwalking Club
Mudgee Bushwalking Club
Murray Valley Bushwalkers
Narrabri Bushwalking Club
National Parks Assn of NSW
National Parks Assn of the ACT
Newcastle Bushwalking Club
Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club
Nimbin Bushwalkers Club
Northern Rivers Bushwalkers Club
NSW Nordic Ski Club
Outdoor Club of NSW

Shoalhaven Bushwalkers
South Coast Bushwalking Club
Southern Highlands Bushwalkers
Span Outdoors
Springwood Bushwalking Club
Suboor United Bushwalkers
Sutherland Bushwalking Club
Sydney Bush Walkers
Sydney Christian Bushwalkers
Sydney University Bushwalkers
Tamworth Bushwalking & Canoe Club
The Bush Club
Tumut & District Bushwalkers Inc
Up and Downers Bushwalking Club
Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club
Upper Lachlan Bushwalkers
Wanderers Bushwalking Club
Warrimah Bushwalking Club
Watagan Wanderers
WEA Ramblers Sydney
Weekday Walkers
Wingecarribee Bushies
Yarrawood Bushwalking Club
Yarra Bushwalking Club Inc
YHA Social & Outdoor Club - Sydney Region



Distress Beacons for bushwalkers

Carrying distress beacons is a safety measure in case of accidents.

The beacon to use for bushwalkers is a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon).

There is comprehensive background information on PLBs on the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad (BWRS) website: www.bwrs.org.au

PLBs are not cheap and have a limited (but long) battery life. You need only one per bushwalking group but many bushwalkers find it difficult to justify the expense.

NSW Police in conjunction with NP&WS have a hire system via the TREK program. The BWRS website has a link to the TREK page of NSW Police. *In the Blue Mountains there is no fee* but you are required to fill in a Trip Intentions form.

In 2006 Australia moved onto digital distress beacons which allowed the individual registration of every beacon.

The free registration of distress beacons in Australia is done via AMSA (Australian Marine Safety Authority). Their

registration web page is easy to find at : www.beacons.amsa.gov.au
Registration must be renewed every two years.

USE of a DISTRESS BEACON

The PLB system is only to be used as a last resort. Your initial distress alert should still be made by telephone, radio or other direct communication if possible.

Direct communication will result in a faster and more appropriate response as you will be able to explain the situation to the emergency services. If you are near your vehicle consider sending somebody to walk out and drive to summon assistance.

A PLB should only be used if no other method of direct communication is available and urgent assistance is required. *To conserve the battery, a mobile phone should stay turned OFF (powered down) and kept safely in your backpack until needed.*

When registering your PLB carefully consider your choice of contacts. All PLBs just send an alarm message "help required". AMSA (or local emergency services) will seek more details of your trip via your

contacts so as to better respond to your emergency.

DISPOSAL of old DISTRESS BEACONS

Beacons have a long battery life but are sealed so the user cannot change the battery. They must be replaced responsibly. Old beacons must NEVER be thrown out. They can still deploy and waste emergency services resources. *The battery may not be flat; just past its guaranteed life.*

The AMSA website has information on disposal options.

FINALLY

A bushwalking distress beacon (PLB) is not a replacement for bushwalking safely. You still need to leave details of your planned trip with a responsible person and be adequately prepared. The BWRS website has a good checklist of DOES & DON'TS.

A distress beacon is your last resort to contact emergency services. Irrespective of how you contact emergency services (written message, radio, mobile phone call or distress beacon) there will still be some delay before emergency services arrive. During this time *having someone in your party with First Aid training is an advantage.*

Abridged from information provided by Keith Maxwell.



COMING EVENTS

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

19 June - Paddy Pallin 6 hour, south of Newcastle

20 August - 6/12 hour west of Newcastle

www.nswrogaining.org

Marie Byles

bushwalker and Australia's first environmental lawyer

Anne McLeod

Marie Byles was born to bushwalking parents – her father worked for New South Wales Railways and the family had free travel throughout the state. In 1918, in her first year at university, she accompanied her father on her first overnight camping trip to Mount Hay near Leura in the upper Blue Mountains. They stayed overnight at the stately Hydro Majestic hotel and then tramped out along a ridge with views that stretched across the vast and breathtaking Grose Valley. They looked down the stupendous escarpments to the green treetops of the Blue Gum Forest far below. A highlight was the naming of a flat-topped rock promontory Butterbox Point, after her father pointed out the similarity to this household object.

From then on, Marie organised bushwalking expeditions with her university girlfriends and mastered the Australian bush with 'brains, compass, sun and map – if there were such'. She recalled how Byles Pass came to be named:

"Most of my own excursions took us into unusual places, but there was one real burst of exploration when another bushwalking girl and I set forth one week-end to re-discover a route said to exist from the Grose Valley to the plateau on the east of Mount Hay. We left Leura very early on a cold winter's morning, breakfasted in the Grose Valley, found the pass up seemingly impregnable cliffs, and arrived back triumphantly on Sunday evening."

From her family's holiday house at Palm Beach on the tip of the peninsula north of Sydney, Marie gazed through a telescope across Broken Bay to the rugged coastline beyond. This was Bouddi Headland, an uninhabited stretch of coast renowned for a shipwreck in 1898 in which most on board perished. Marie convinced a group of girl friends to bush-bash through the thickly vegetated landscape down to the crescent-shaped Maitland Bay, named after the wrecked paddle steamer whose rusting boilers were still visible on the nearby bombora.

After graduating in law in 1924, Marie

gained fame as the first female solicitor to practise in NSW. It was a time of radical social change when women were committed to the agenda of equal rights. Marie served as honorary solicitor for various women's organisations challenging discriminatory laws.

Despite her passion for this cause, she was desperate to climb real mountains and set off on a round-the-world adventure to the Scottish Highlands, Norway and the Canadian Rockies where she gained the skills necessary to climb at high altitudes. On her return she headed straight to the Southern Alps of New Zealand where she engaged two guides and made the summit of Mt Cook in a blizzard. The descent was hell but after a rest Marie felt exhilarated, as if life had just begun.

Back in Sydney she joined the newly formed Sydney Bush Walkers, the first club to allow both men and women members. She served as a publicist for the embryonic bushwalking movement and wrote newspaper articles with poetic descriptions about places within easy reach of Sydney hoping to inspire others to enjoy the beauty and health benefits of the outdoors. By the early 1930s the bushwalkers were awakening to the need to preserve our natural heritage.

The campaign to save the Blue Gum Forest was the catalyst for the formation of the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs in NSW. Marie then set her sights on getting the area around Bouddi Headland reserved. She used the resources of her legal office to ensure the Federation's successful submission to the Lands Department. Bouddi Natural Park was proclaimed in 1936 and Marie was appointed a trustee. With typical efficiency, she organised working bees with 120 people clearing walking tracks around the coast and to various lookouts.

Bouddi National Park has expanded in size over the years and remains the only undeveloped stretch of coast from Sydney to Newcastle. Today the park consists of 1532 hectares and Maitland Bay is at the heart of a 300-hectare marine extension to protect the marine life and shoreline ecosystem. Above Bouddi, Marie Byles Lookout is one of the most popular in the area. It gives commanding views across Broken Bay to Barrenjoey Head with its lighthouse standing sentinel over Palm Beach where Marie used to gaze across through her telescope.

Marie Byles deserves recognition for her sustained commitment to nature preservation and the part she played as Australia's first environmental lawyer.

See also 'The Summit of Her Ambition: the spirited life of Marie Byles', by Anne McCleod, www.annemcleod.net. ♦

Marie Byles headed for Mt Hay, 1918

Maitland Bay and Bouddi Headland



Marie Byles and walkers at Bouddi, 1930s



Working Bee at Bouddi, 1940s



Marie Byles parents bushwalking, 1913



Book Reviews . . .

Song Of the Wild

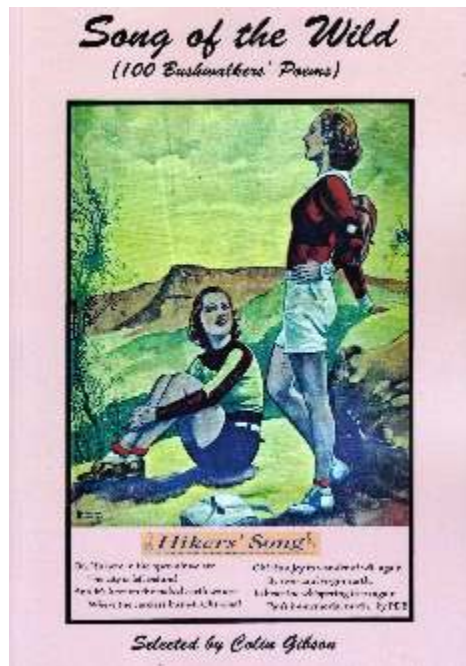
Ed Colin Gibson

175 pages
ISBN 9780980314533
\$25 inc postage from
www.greenaissance.com

In 1989 Colin Gibson compiled 'Sing With The Wind', an anthology of poetry and light verse on bushwalking themes taken from club magazines, manuscripts and personal sources dating from as far back as the early 20th century. It included works by members of the Mountain Trails Club, the Raggle Taggle Gypsies and Sydney Bush Walkers, among others. That book has long been out of print.

This is its sequel, 'Song Of The Wild', another selection by Col with illustrations by Lloyd Jones, published by Greenaissance. It contains verse by some of the writers who appeared in the first book, such as Roy Davies (to whom the book is dedicated), Marie Byles, Dorothy Lawry, Kath McKay and Ted Hartley, with many more recent contributors as well. The book includes an introduction giving interesting background information on some of the earlier pieces.

A lot of the poems are from 'another era', and may not resonate with the modern



generation. But even so, there are some funny bits and good bits, even going back to Henry Lawson in 1889. If you are into historic bushwalking poetry, have a look at this book.

Roger Caffin

Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond, Vol 7

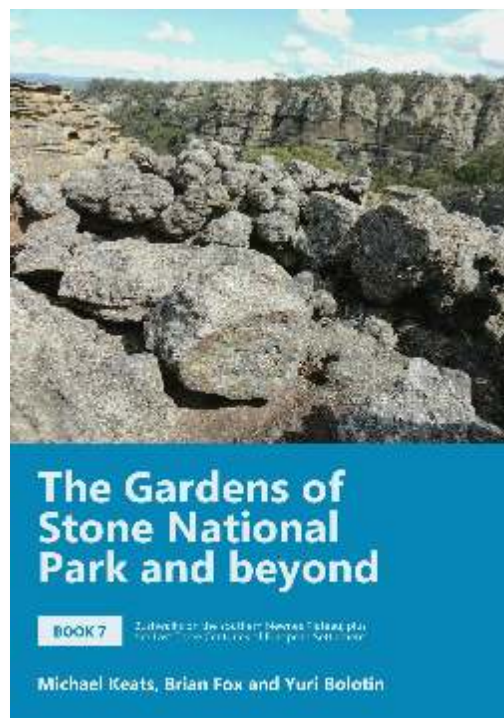
Michael Keats, Brian Fox and Yuri Bolotin

ISBN 9780987054661
744 pages
\$50 from www.bushexplorers.com.au

If the GoS books get any bigger, I won't be able to lift them. 744 pages, admittedly filled with wonderful colour pictures of the area - the southern edge of the Newnes plateau, plus a whole lot about the last three centuries of European settlement in the area. Initially I questioned the last claim, but the first visit to the area was in 1823, so it is pretty close.

The pictures are wonderful, the walks descriptions are excellent (as might be expected by now), and the personal histories for local identities are very thoroughly researched. How they do it, I don't know. But where the book excels (imho) is in the comments about politics and mining - both of which are dire threats to the whole area. Right at the start:

'The political reality is that royalties from "king coal", lurking hundreds of metres below the surface, fund the mendicant state of NSW distorting and dictating government decisions to the detriment of our heritage.' (p11)



'The most worrying aspect of walking this river [Coxs] is the burden of heavy metals that are discharged by several coal mines, the ash dam on Sawyers Swamp Ck, and the Wallerawang Power Station, all located further upstream.' (p371)

Why the book was not banned in NSW remains a mystery :-)

Buy it before it gets burnt.

Roger Caffin

Walks, Tracks & Trails of Queensland's Tropics

Derrick Stone.

ISBN 9781486303076
280 pages, full colour
\$40 from publishing.sales@csiro.au

Derrick Stone has written three 'Walks, Tracks & Trails' books, for Victoria, NSW and now Queensland. They focus mainly on the walks, with just a few pages of other information. Each walk has nice colour pictures of places, a description of the walk and a map.

This may not be all that useful for a hard-core bushwalker looking for a 10-day walk, as most of the walks are little more than half a day. However, if you are touristising or conferencing in the area up the Qld coast with your family or friends, this might offer a welcome respite from car travel, art galleries and McDonalds.

Roger Caffin




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Camp on a terrace made in Inca times,
Cedros Alpamayo Circuit, Peru.
Photo: Linda Groom, Canberra Bushwalking Club.