

THE BUSH CLUB NEWSLETTER



Winter 2014

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Walks Reports Winter p.12
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Patagonia - Once Regarded as the End of the World

By Peter Cunningham

Not any more. It contains several jewels which have put it on the *must do* list. It has a reputation for dreadful weather with extreme winds, justified earlier this year when a person died of exposure on the track. Fortunately we were lucky and had excellent weather.

We – my daughter, Michelle, and I - went there in February for three weeks to see the mountains: *Torres Del Paine* in Chile and *Cerro Fitzroy* in Argentina. They

...largest ice field in the world outside Antarctica and Greenland...

are extraordinary, with dramatic jagged spires of granite rising vertically from the surrounds. *Torres del Paine* is an isolated mountain massif east of the main *Andes* range, with a 140km track going around it with the highest pass only 1180m high. Behind, is the huge Patagonian ice field, the largest in the world outside Antarctica and Greenland, with massive glaciers spilling down both east and west of the *Andes*.

First ascents

We did the *W circuit*, 70km long. Highlights were two tracks up side valleys reaching deep into the mountains, and the *Grey Glacier*. The *Mirador Torres* track climbs up to a spectacular viewpoint looking across a lake at the amazing three towers (*Torres*) rising almost vertically above a rock wall and glacier behind it. The highest tower is only 2850m but it's a 1000m rock climb up an almost vertical tower. These are serious rock climbs,

first done in the 50s and 60s when climbers, mostly European, were looking for first ascents around the world, and there were plenty in the *Andes*. They are a magnificent sight, we sat there in the warm sun eating lunch without a breath of wind – magnificent.



Los Glaciares NP Argentina

Boom of avalanches

Next, the *Valle Frances* is a long valley leading up into the heart of the *Torres del Paine* massif. The avalanches were booming down as we walked up the valley, which ended in a huge cirque with a total of twelve peaks around its head, notably the three *Cuernos*, or Horns, which are a prominent sight when driving into the area. Again, we lay around in the sun with no wind taking it all in.

Third was the *Grey Glacier*, a long river of ice cascading down from the vast ice field behind it with dozens of ice floes floating around the lake. Next night we got the fearsome winds we'd heard about – the tent was buffeted all night by a wild gale, and at 3am one of the poles snapped and tore a hole in the tent. From then on we stayed in hostels.

The area was crowded, 170 tents at one place. Unfortunately, the facilities were not adequate. However, it's great to see so many people of all ages out there including lots of young people (and lots of gorgeous girls); trekking is alive and

well in Patagonia. Added to by the international walking brigade, there in force.

In the *Cerro Fitzroy* mountains we did day trips, first to the huge vertical finger of the *Torre Fitzroy*, another gravity-defying pinnacle of rock set in a sea of ice. Next a 20km walk with a steep 1000m climb to a glacial lake directly below the spectacular pillar of *Cerro Fitzroy* which towers behind it. And another sunny windless day. Brilliant.

The *Perito Moreno Glacier* is an advancing glacier and, as a result, has a different aspect to a receding one – huge ice cliffs at its face 70m high and over 4km wide. I've been on numerous glaciers before but never anything like this monster. And all the time seracs (huge blocks or columns of glacial ice) were crashing into the lake below with loud explosions.



Sunset Torres del Paine Park

Before they limited access, people climbed down to the lake level for a closer look – and over 20 years some 20 people were killed by debris spread by the crashing seracs. We didn't go down. Finally, another glacier tour in Chile to the *Balmaceda* and *Serrano Glaciers*, fittingly topped off with a large glass of whisky cooled with glacial ice.

Total cost was \$5000 each including \$3000 airfare. You can do the complete tour described above including the *W circuit* staying in refugios and eating at their reasonable restaurants, and staying in the town of El Chalten, for

this price, though it's much more expensive for a commercial tour.



Hydration - tongue in cheek treatise for Suckers

By Michael Pratt

The common screw-topped bottle is a simple device. It is watertight and reliable. It comes in many sizes, is transparent, easily flushed and always ready for reuse. Old-school bush walkers like myself who prefer to pause and swallow liquid refreshment from an upturned bottle are bemused by the increasing numbers who suckle a piece of tubing as they stride. Converts of the *I want it now generation*, they pleasure themselves almost continuously, mouth over nipple, partaking in a steady sip and suck.



Does sip and suck remind them of their infancy?

So, on walks these days it is the swallows amongst us using good old fashioned bottles who demand a drink stop and the added opportunity to regain breath and socialise as participants rehydrate. The club has a reputation for 'bolting'; water stops and morning tea stops overlooked. Is this reluctance to halt fuelled by the mobility granted to *multi-tasking suckers* who walk, talk, sip and suck as they stride along the track?

Suckers, however, have become something of a hazard, testing the humour of friends. They are known, when seated, to lose control of their bladders. This is when an unsuspecting companion in an adjoining seat suffers a damp derriere.

This may well cause a panic attack for the companion should he/she be recovering from a urological op. It also causes embarrassment for an innocent party when he/she must arise displaying a wet backside. There is added anxiety when the innocent delves into their now damp-bottomed pack to seek the source of leakage from bottles never known to leak before. But then it dawns on them: the wet seat in between, the water on the ferry floor. All this has leaked from the nipple-equipped plastic bladder contraption carried by that adjacent friend.



These flexible plastic bladders commonly contain between 1.5 to 3 litres of liquid housed inside a pack. The capped-mouth for filling and outlet connections for sucking are both sources of leaks. The outlet-tube nipple from which suckers derive such satisfaction is notorious for dribbling. This often happens when the parent-pack is set down. It happened recently on the Cremorne ferry. The writer, unaware, fortunately escaped a soaking. However, his pack stacked next to the sucker's did not.

Maintaining internal cleanliness of the bladder and associated plumbing is a further challenge for devotees. 'All Bran' does not do the trick despite what TV adverts promise. Periodically, one must irrigate the apparatus using soluble tablets provided by the manufacturer or with some form of bleach. Meanwhile, back on track and sucking, it is not apparent to the sucker as to how much

water remains. Pausing to swallow from the good old fashioned bottle sees the container extracted from the pack. The remaining water is eyeballed and consumption easily rationed for the rest of the day.

Badges?

In view of the uptake of *sucking devices* and the number of mishaps, perhaps club guidelines might be devised to make members more mindful of their bladders. Tips issued for 'safe use and maintenance'. Perhaps a badge might be worn on a bladder-equipped pack, like they do on hazardous-load trucks, to alert others of the risks posed therein. The writer narrowly escaped a soaking for a second time on the same day when an adjacent bladder-equipped pack dumped its contents around his feet during morning tea. Loaded with water, this plastic bladder ruptured without warning, resulting in premature ejaculation of contents.

And so, in view of the above and more, the writer remains a confirmed swallower using the reliable upturned plastic bottle, almost never known to leak. He and others are truly bemused by numbers who prefer to carry an unreliable leak prone 'nipple-equipped rehydration device'. Having been on the receiving end of leaks and in anticipation of more to come, I say to our sippers and suckers, *Maintain your bladders, check your plumbing and please avoid dumping on a friend.*



Selection of people for overseas trips

The committee has been concerned about the belief held by some members that the selection process for popular trips should be done on a first-to-contact the leader basis. Historically, this was the case but as time has passed many leaders have adopted an *expression of interest* method. Leaders then select a group they believe will work best in terms of the greatest good for the greatest number. The difficulty is some members have been unaware of this change and have on occasions felt upset when they have contacted the leader quickly and still missed out.

Some members believe that in the interests of fairness, the first people to contact the leader should be entitled to a place. This method of selection is actually no fairer than any other. Members may miss out because they are off-line for a few days, their program is lost or slowed down by the post, they are on holidays and don't have contacts to keep watch for them when the program comes out. They all have good reason to say first-in is not the fairest method. Fair is about perceptions created by the circumstances in which individuals find themselves when the trip is advertised.

Leader decides

The committee does not have a policy on how leaders select members for popular walks and trips. We believe the choice should be left to leaders. They spend hours organizing trips, pay the same money as other members and shoulder responsibility during the trips. As such, they are entitled to use any method of selection they choose. The leader is the person who has to live with whatever transpires as a result of the decision making process and is,

therefore, entitled to have that autonomy.

The committee has sent an email to leaders highlighting some of the issues around selection criteria. They have been encouraged to use an *expression of interest* system when advertising multi-day trips but, as previously stated, are free to use any system.

They have also been asked to be aware of the frustration of members who miss out on repeated trips and the need to be thoughtful and considerate to members who are not selected.

Selection Criteria

Below are some possible selection criteria leaders may consider using an *expression of interest* system. There are no easy answers to some of the questions; they will depend on circumstances and the leader finally has to make a judgment call.

- *Prospective or guest status*

Is it reasonable to take a prospective or guest of a member (eg the partner) if a full member has missed out on selection?

- *Member skills that benefit the group eg ability and willingness to lead a section of the walk, driving, map reading, cooking*

Is it reasonable to expect members to actively participate in the trip by helping with these types of skills or are there other considerations?

- *A balance of couples and singles and gender balance*

Will a single person feel isolated if everyone else is coupled, or will a single woman or man feel isolated? It probably depends on the person.

- *Leader's knowledge about the applicant*

Is the leader willing to take someone they have never met?

- *Member contribution*

Is it reasonable to consider the level of contribution the member has made to the club eg walks leading, committee work, providing a home for leaders get-togethers, assistance with clerical tasks or organization of big events such as birthday celebrations? This question looks at the issue of mutual obligation.

- *Member involvement*

Should a member who walks regularly be given priority over someone who may have just joined the club for a cheap overseas trip?

- *Previous trips*

Should a member who has had a previous club trip to the same location be included if the trip has a waiting list?

- *Level of fitness and walking pace*

Will large differences in walking pace or fitness create problems during the trip?

The above questions show how complex the process of selection can be. The purpose of the *expression of interest* system allows leaders to select a compatible group where interactions and living arrangements are harmonious and members cooperative and willing to help when needed.

It also means members do not have to monitor their various technology devices waiting for the walks updates or walks program to come out so they are first on the list. *Expressions of interest* are taken over a time frame that is dependant on how long the leader has to organize the trip.



How Do I Maximize My Chance to Get On Trips?

- Participate regularly in club walks so you know the leaders and they know you.
- Develop your skills by attending leadership training and becoming a walks leader.
- Help in other ways eg committee work, club functions, clerical tasks or organization of club events such as birthday celebrations, being a volunteer back up person for a committee position.
- If you missed selection, offer to lead or co-lead a second or third group. The first leader will have done the organization and will most likely be helpful with advice. You, in turn, will learn new skills and gain a sense of satisfaction from giving your group a fantastic travel experience. Several leaders have learnt to lead using this method and are now great assets to the club.

This article is intended to bring more transparency to the process of selection of applicants for trips. It also sheds light on the issues leaders may have to grapple with when selecting a group for multi-day or overseas trips.

Hopefully, members who miss out on trips will be able to maximize their opportunity of being selected next time or, in the spirit of mutual obligation, put on a wonderful trip that will enhance our program and bring joy to our members.

Carol Henderson on behalf of the committee



Doubtful Sound, NZ

By Morrie Donovan

My partner, Jocelyn Gaskill, and I recently completed a four-day guided kayak/camping paddle on *Doubtful Sound*, a remote, large complex tidal water system in Fiordland - missed by Captain Cook on his voyage up the New Zealand coast in the 1770s because of its concealed entrance to the open sea. Average yearly rainfall is 6 to 9 metres.

Our guide picked us up in *Te Anau*, with six other paddlers of similar vintage and we drove to *Lake Manapouri*, without fully knowing what we were really in for. We transferred our gear onto a very large high speed boat and crossed the lake as the sun was rising. Then we transferred the gear and equipment onto a 4-wheel drive bus for the steep ascent over *Wilmot Pass* and descended to *Camp Cove*, the eastern end of *Doubtful Sound*.



Lake Manapouri

Finally, all four double-expedition kayaks were loaded and we were all dressed in full length wetsuits, thermals, woollen beanies, spray decks, etc. It was a long paddle to a very late lunch as beach access to the sheer cliff banks of the Sound are few and far between. After 22km we arrived at our campsite on *Bradshaw Sound* and with a big team effort, a very large tarp was erected, then tents, then under the tarp an insect proof room with nine little chairs and a large gas cooker - we were set for a night free of

the renowned Sandflies.

The predicted rain arrived overnight and the next day was wet and cold with heavy rain and rainbows. We had an exciting wind against tide crossing on *Thompson Sound* to the protection

...half day cruisey paddle

of *Secretary Island*. There were spectacular waterfalls everywhere. We reached our campsite in the late afternoon inside *Crooked Arm Reach* where we worked together setting up camp in heavy rain for a two night stay. An even larger tarp was used and greatly appreciated. At 6pm our guide received a favourable forecast on the satellite phone with news that tomorrow would be a good day.

The next day we enjoyed a great half-day cruisey paddle exploring further up into *Crooked Arm*, with sunny periods lengthening. We spent the arvo drinking tea and drying out our wet gear. Our guide had a bright idea - if we all agreed to rise at 3.30am we could break camp and be on the water at 5am and exit *Crooked Arm Reach* under the full moon. We all agreed.

The next morning there was quite a bit of excitement in the dark early morning rush to be ready. Once on the water, it was an eerie feeling as the moon was still behind an almost sheer 1500m mountain. The group stayed tight till the sun rose and we reached the main *Doubtful Sound* channel and the home run to *Camp Cove*. It was a day to remember with pods of dolphins constantly playing with us, seals and rare white penguins nesting.

At *Camp Cove* we repeated the logistics of the first morning, and arrived back in *Te Anau* late afternoon, tired and elated.

In summary, I admired the skill of our young guide both on and off the water with his emphasis on teamwork. However, his lack of knowledge of older folk requiring comfort stops more often grew as the days went by. We experienced strong Katabatic Winds three times during the first two days. The kayaks used were 6M heavy duty fibre glass, when empty a four-person lift and when packed a six-person lift, all round a great boat for this venue.

Our group were all of similar ability and moulded into a good team with the heavy lifting of boats, gear, etc. Mother Nature did the rest to make it an exciting and memorable adventure in an extremely inaccessible and remote part of New Zealand.

Welcome to New Members

Merran Maclaren, James Mahoney, Robert Gubbins, Douglas Irvin, Helen Zammitt, Diane Lancaster, Mary Ann Irvin, Lucy Morris, Mary Fisher, Genevieve Savill, John Bell, Ron Binet, Mike Quigley, Julie Rea, Yvonne Everett.

Small Change

For some time the committee has been discussing the increasing disparity in costs between distributing the newsletter in soft copy by email and hard copy by Australian Post. The hard copy incurs the cost of printing as well as postal charges.

It has been decided the club should move with the times. So while the annual membership fee will remain at \$25, there will be an additional annual charge of \$10 for those opting to continue to receive the newsletter in hard copy. The additional charge only covers half the cost to produce and mail the newsletter and, as we have been doing for the past couple of years, we encourage members to opt for the soft copy to help the club keep costs down.

Mt Ruapehu, Trevor, Rogo and a French lady

By Trevor McAlister

Walkers: Trevor McAlister (leader), Graham Byrne, John Sharpe, Rogo Owens, and Lionel Robson (prospective).

The morning is spectacular. No clouds and no wind. We make our way by car from our lodging to the highest point you can drive to on the north side of New Zealand's Mt Ruapehu. On impulse, I stop for a young hitchhiker. Although she squeezes into the backseat beside Rogo, it is Lionel, sitting in the front, who engages her in conversation. He speaks in short, measured sentences because she is French. It is no surprise that when we arrive at the chairlift, it is Lionel with whom she rides to our starting point at 2020 metres. The chairlift is free for anyone over the age of 70 – some qualify. Lionel elects to wait at New Zealand's highest café.

Rogo heads straight up

Our female hitchhiker turns her attention to Rogo whom she assumes, correctly, to be her best chance of making it to the summit. Within minutes, she is chasing him up the mountain. I suspect he is walking faster than usual. I cannot help but admire the man. Having climbed this way before, I am well aware of the consequences of choosing a wrong route through the steep and loose rock ahead. Without a track, Rogo seems to pick his way instinctively avoiding all the traps that prevented us from reaching the crater when we were here last year.

I do the maths. I have managed to lose three fifths of my group but have gained one. I wonder how

Graham Conden or Tony Hickson - leaders of far greater experience than I - would handle this. I am burdened by my inability to keep up with the French Lady and my feeling of personal inadequacy.

Gutsy lady

Within fifteen minutes, the French Lady is a hundred metres in front. Here is a gutsy lady. I guess she is ten years younger than my daughter and yet has the confidence to travel across the world on her own. She has minor tattooing which is always a negative from my narrow perspective, but she is slim and tanned and has the arms, shoulders and calf muscles of a young man. Although she wears a wedding ring, I am certain that even without this subtle discouragement, she would easily ward off unwelcome advances.



Rogo Owens (right) finds two friends at summit

After leaving the last of the man-made ski apparatus that infests the upper slopes, we are in amongst loose rock. The stones are the size of marbles and form a thin layer upon much harder soil and rock beneath. My boot fails to purchase and slides until it is arrested by the accumulation of gravel. Sometimes the gravel fails to accumulate and my boot continues to slide as the gravel slides with it. I lunge for a larger rock and too slides, crashing and bouncing into

the moraine-covered ice below. I worry I might follow or someone above is

...the woman is heavily made up...every possible fashion accessory...

dislodging rocks in the same way as me. I am grateful for the two sticks that I carry and wish I had bought a helmet.

Rogo finally stops. I catch up and empty the grit that has found its way into my boot. We offer one another snacks and gulp water. There is a Japanese couple nearby. The woman is heavily made up and wearing every bush walking fashion accessory available. I guess this helps compensate for the physical attributes she appears to lack. I doubt they will make it. I apply sunscreen with the practiced dexterity that avoids greasing my hands.

Where are The Hobbits?

We make our way around a curious little rock hill, the shape of a woman's breast. It has a nipple as well as a small building that houses volcanic monitoring devices. The way is easier now and there is a track. We look back. The perfect cone shape of Mt Ngauruhoe is deep blue and silhouetted to the east. Behind it is Mt Tongariro and, to the west, Mt Taranaki, another almost perfect cone. The bright orange and brown rocks around us contrast with the remnants of glacier snow and a cloudless sky. The view is almost surreal. I look around for *Hobbits*. This is indeed the place to film fantasy.

We crest the final saddle and before us is the summit plateau. Immediately below is an ice shelf, fissured and fractured, containing blocks of ice the size of family cars. Across a kilometre of dust and ice are the *Cathedral Rocks*, geometric and beautiful against the skyline.

Anyone for a 45 degree swim?

There remains a short climb to our objective; *The Dome* at 2672 metres. From here we can see the crater, circular and pale blue surrounded by rock of orange, grey, deep red and purple. The colours are unexpected and vivid. On one side, snow leads right to the edge of the lake. A young New Zealander tells me his father used to swim in the lake. Thin wispy smoke rises from the lake which can be as hot as 45 degrees. In recent times there have been numerous eruptions possibly the most spectacular in 1996. More are expected. I keep this in mind.



Mt Ruapehu

It is a real privilege to be in this special place. To my surprise, the Japanese couple arrive. Soon we are taking photographs of one another. Even Rogo appears distracted by the grandeur for, at least on this occasion, there are no funny hats, wigs or trophies. A shelter hut is anchored near the top of *The Dome*. After heavy snow, you enter via the chimney. Sadly, in recent times with global warming, the door is almost always the best way in.

For those who journeyed with me on this and the other eight programmed walks, I give my thanks for your support and company and for your contribution to a life experience none of us will ever forget.



Alex Colley OAM (1909-2014)

By Judy O'Connor



Anyone who had the honour of meeting, walking or working with the late Alex Colley, OAM who died recently at the age of 104 years, won't need much background information about this outstanding individual. Alex, who received many awards and accolades during his long life, including the *Order of Australia* in 1984 for his service to the conservation movement long before it became a mainstream issue, was a member of the legendary Tiger walkers of the 1930s and the most complete gentleman you could hope to meet. The Tiger walkers were a group of Sydney Bushwalkers, including the late Dot Butler (the *Barefoot Bushwalker*) famous for all sorts of daring feats including multi-day walks in unchartered wilderness areas.

Born in Lithgow in 1909, he joined the newly formed Sydney Bush Walkers in 1936 and went on to chalk up nine decades of bushwalking. He married fellow Tiger walker Hilma Galliot who once reportedly walked 50 miles (not kilometres) down the Grose River with fellow walker Gordon Smith in 24 hours. Alex's qualifications included degrees in Agriculture and Economics and in 2004 he published a stunning coffee table book *Blue Mountains World Heritage* with Henry Gold's magnificent photographs. In his 96th year he published *Blue Mountains World Heritage and Sustainability* to wide acclaim. As former NSW Premier, Bob Carr, said when the work of Alex

and others resulted in the proclamation of the Blue Mountains as a World Heritage listing: '*Few people get to deliver anything as grand...for future generations. Without Alex there would be little wilderness protected in this State. We owe Alex a lot.*'



Annual Thank-You

Over 60 leaders rolled up to the recent *Leaders' Get-Together* held every year to thank our hard working leaders for the valued contribution they are making to our club. Food and drink flowed and conversation ranged across every subject under the sun. A huge thank-you to Alison and Andy Briscoe for their generosity in lending their home for the occasion.



Left to right: Jan Wilson, Barbara Mitchell, Katherine Gloor, John and Margaret Booth



What happens if leader is injured?

A couple of years ago a serious incident occurred when a leader had a serious fall and was taken to hospital by helicopter. No one in the group knew the route and no one had a map. A member of the Police Rescue Unit escorted them out. This raised an important issue. What to do if the leader is seriously injured?

A few ideas

Here are a few suggestions for leaders. They are not prescriptive as some leaders may have their own contingency plans.

1. Check prior to the walk, or at the beginning, whether any one else knows the route and would be able to find the way out if necessary.
2. If there is no one, check if there is a capable map reader who would be able to follow the route with you.
3. If not, ask for a volunteer to be mindful of the route. Chat with the person and point out significant landmarks.

While an incident such as the one that occurred is unusual, being mindful of the possibility of such situations could avoid a night out in the bush and prevent unnecessary use of community resources.

Carol Henderson on behalf of committee



Centennial Park The 'People's Park'

By Judy O'Connor

This 220 hectare urban park, just 4km from the CBD, is rich in history and tales of other times. For example, in 1851 it was the scene of a duel between the first Premier of NSW, Stuart Donaldson, and the Surveyor-General, Thomas Mitchell. Both men survived. In 1986 it was the centre of notoriety when Sallie-Anne Huckstepp, described by newspaper reports at the time as 'a prostitute who mingled with notorious criminals and blew the whistle on crooked cops', was found drowned in Busby Pond. No one has been convicted of her murder.

The ponds known as *Lachlan Swamps* were named after Governor Macquarie who originally set aside the land for grazing and watering stock. They were the chief water supply for Sydney for many years. Water was carried to Hyde Park along a tunnel called Busby's Bore. In 1888 Sir Henry Parkes dedicated the park to celebrate 100 years of European settlement in Australia declaring the land 'emphatically the people's park'.

In more recent times, Nobel Prize winning author, Patrick White, lived opposite the park and was known to locals as a regular walker and staunch protector of the sprawling parklands.

