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WALKS AND TALKS

The Magazine

Of

THE BUSH CLUB

A Word from the President

Bushwalking in Australia is a recent recreation and there is not a great deal that has been written on the subject. I hope in its own personal way WALKS AND TALKS may add to those available writings.

This year the Bush Club celebrates its 17th birthday. Many members are walkers with years of experience and here is a place for them to share their knowledge with us.

The Bush Club membership is under fifty persons and for WALKS AND TALKS, our magazine, to be a continual success it will need your support.

Eric Cadzow

TASMANIAN TOUR

FROM the olive coloured fields and bushlands of the mainland A.N.A's magic carpet dropped us onto the lush pastures of the Green Island - Tasmania.

Patiently, at Devonport Airport, we waited to be returned to our goods and chattels, the packs which were to provide for a fortnight - our shelter and our pantry. Our bed, our wardrobe and our frugally stocked linen press.

Eric, the president who was to bring a touch of civilization to Tasmania's mountain fastness, immaculately dressed, insisting as he would on a daily shave where others would proudly display a stubbly week's growth, faithful replica of the tough Tasmanian scrub.

Peter, the wiry Englishman who, out of the unfathomable depths of his 50 lb rucksack, would produce choice morsels at a time when others were down to the last uninteresting items of dehydrated grub.

"Red" Martin, whom long periods in the outback had taught to keep his phlegm, whether he was dressed in a sleeveless singlet shivering in driving rain and snow or whether he was sitting down to a billy full of burnt offerings which were to be his three course meal.

Finally, the writer, a bundle of anxiety, wondering whether his travelling arrangements would leave the party stranded in the middle of nowhere and whether he would be held responsible should Old Father Sol ever hide his face behind the rain clouds.

Four hours later, after a huge feast, saying goodbye to the flesh-pots of Egypt, four men, heavy with food and unable to move, were lying on the floor of Picknick Hut, Waldheim, at the Northern end of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair Mountain reserve.

5 a.m.! Quick breakfast and packing and ready to start for the Great Adventure.

Up to Crater Lake, where grey vertical cliffs are falling into a mirror of lead, the sun is stubbornly refusing to brighten the scene for the patiently waiting colour photographers.

Then up and ever upward, attracted by the dark outline of Cradle Mountain, occasionally looking back to a maze of gray lakes and tarns. On Cradle Mountain rock needles shrouded in mist, boulders and hanging snow drifts.

Rest on the Summit! Our party forms a tiny island in outer space surrounded by the absolute nothing.

Down again on the overland track we saw, at a thoroughly inhospitable place, a small tent fluttering in the wind and a young couple hovering over the caricature of a fire which was trying to show a small flame through the smoke - love's imagination building a palace in the desert!

When we came past the turnoff to Barn Bluff, it was raining again. The magic of Bob MacCracken's promise was wearing thin, Bob MacCracken, the ranger, who had promised fine weather when we met him at Waldheim. Soon we were slogging through the moors, onto Lake Windermere, Scotland's Lake District brought to us across 10,000 miles of space, Highland mist included.

We arrived at Windermere Hut just in time to attend a sacrificial service celebrated by two members of the numerous Fraternity of Stomach Worshippers. 70 lb of food they had carried up to the Altar and now they were quarrelling because they could not find the wishing bone in the roast fowl they were eating.

As the following morning looked promising and we could actually see Barn Bluff, we started early for it. Back again through the moors, but now in sunshine. Up over Lake Wills, we can now see an endless mountain chain to the South, but on the summit of Barn Bluff the mist looked the same as it had looked on Cradle Mountain.

Returned to Windermere Hut, we started in the afternoon on our journey further south. Now on the plateau, we could see the giants: Mount Pelion West, Mount Ossa, Mount Oakley and all the others whose names we did not know and far, far away the Frenchman's Cap, sawtooth shaped.

The next night we camped out on a lush clearing by the river with the ominous name of Frog Flat. Frogs are where they can find food, their favourite food is mosquitoes and I am sure they had enough to eat. Still we had a pleasant campfire and a peaceful night.

From there we moved over to Pelion Hut and since the afternoon started again wet we did not climb Mount Oakley to see nothing on another mountain but following an enthusiastic description in the good book "Peaks and High Places" we decided to go down to the Forth River Gorge. We saw no gorge and the umbrella leaves of the tree ferns were leaking badly. Still, rain drenched as we were, we showed our hospitality to a horde of leeches. They seemed to call out to each other: 'It's on! Come and have your fill!'

When we came back to our quarters at Pelion Hut, the storm of invasion had broken over it - Y.H.A walkers everywhere! Dripping ground sheets, packs, billies, a place by the fire as precious as a gold watch.

Next day on Pelion Gap we snubbed Mount Ossa and Mount Pelion East which we could not see for the mist and rain and beat the Y.H.A. crowd to Du Cane Hut. The hut is a jewel of the reserve, faced by the mighty cliffs of The Cathedral and approached through evergreen pine forests.

Dalton, Fergusson and Cathedral Falls were showing off in their best dress of white lace; this was a case of rain improving the scenery!

The following day it happened: There was brilliant sunshine! So back to Pelion Gap where mighty Mount Ossa was shedding her seventh veil and showing herself naked for the first time. Climbing was sheer joy but on the summit there was mist again. So quickly down the snow drifts and

back to the Gap and up to Pelion East. Here the miracle occurred: Clear views as far as the eye could see, an immense circle of mountain, reward for the rock climb up to the pinnacle, a photographer's paradise.

Next day when we arrived at Nicols Hut we saw that the Y.H.A crowd had descended on it and after a short but miserable interlude at Lake Marion where the rain was as cold and fierce as ever, we decided to camp out. A kerosene swab, little sticks the size of tooth picks and tons of patience produced a roaring fire, where Peter and I stayed up nearly until midnight eating, talking and baking damper, not noticing the fine rain falling down all around us.

The following day we strolled over to Narcissus Hut, the end of our walk through the Reserve, situated at the upper end of Lake St Clair. Here we celebrated New Year's Eve in high spirits and great comfort. We had after all successfully concluded the trip.

The following day bushwalkers kept on coming from all sides, settling down in swarms like blow flies on rotten meat. Wet gear everywhere and outside the outlook just as dismal, with the rain coming down as ever. We prayed for the launch to arrive at 1 p.m., as booked for, but it became 2 p.m., 3, 4, 5 and still no launch. We sat down to dinner and suddenly heard heavenly music: chuck, chuck, chuck, the launch is coming! Out I stormed, frying pan with powdered egg in one hand and billy with stewed apples in the other, to secure our accommodation.

The next night we spent in great comfort in a cabin at Cynthia Bay at the other end of Lake St Clair, running a shuttle service to the nearby store for more and more food and delicacies. We shivered swimming in the lake, went through a blizzard on Mount Rufus and enriched the diet of a begging wallaby.

Next evening, when arrived in Hobart we decided to have a good rest and enjoy the gentle pleasures of civilized life. But on the morning after, when there was brilliant sunshine, we quickly made up our minds and arranged to go to National Park. Lunch time saw us already 3.000 feet up at Lake Dobson.

We took two days to mop up the area, Segars lookout, Mount Field East, Mount Field West and the Tarn Shelf round trip and a morning's rest in glorious sunshine was thrown in for good measure.

Our party was now dwindling like the famous ten little nigger boys: Martin had already left us at Cynthia Bay for a road trip round Tasmania and now Peter left to go back to Sydney. Two days later Eric and I said goodbye to the Friendly Isle.

Albert Fried

BUSH CLUB FASHIONS

EVERYONE knows that the ladies take a pride in their appearance, and so this is limited to a discussion of trends of fashions in the male bushwalking world.

Starting from the top, the first thing that strikes our attention is the walkers' headgear. The white sailcloth hat is almost universal. The white is worn in varying shades, and the hand of Schiaparelli and others can be seen to have influenced the various designs. The millinery is worn at all manner of angles. I have noticed a trend which seems to be influencing the Bush Club. Two prominent members have been observed to wear a hat with a large porthole at the back just above the brim. This is definitely an indication of how the well dressed bushwalker will wear his headgear in future.

A final word about hats. One member has been seen wearing a lovely pastel blue creation!

And now a word about the absence of hats. Some hardy souls brave the elements without any head covering at all, and allow their crowning glory to wave freely in the breeze. For them no need of nose shield, beauty cream or the like.

And as to the other extremity or extremities, foot wear varies from spiked beetle crushers to light golf shoes, and even sandals and moccasins. But the most intriguing article of male bushwalking attire is the gaiter, that stubborn shall I say garment which is stubbornly resists all efforts to tame it and bring it into service. However, I will say that a properly behaved gaiter wards off many a savage spiked attack.

I'd like to talk about fashions for the tropical and temperate zones, having dealt only with the poles which are of course apart, but lack of space prevents me. I hope my readers will realize the hours spent by the male bushwalkers deciding on the right things to wear.

Maurice Clare

PRACTICAL HINTS

IT is these little items in our packs that often make or marr the day.

There we are, for instance, scrambling through scrub and undergrowth, getting our bare legs decorated with patterns of red scratches. It's painful and ugly. Of course, the stronger sex hide the scratches during the week with long trousers, but the poor girls have to wear nylon stockings. What about getting a pair of worn-out school-boys' or golf socks from somewhere, cut them off at the ankles and wear the leggings during those scratchy, cross-country parts of the walk? They are easily slipped on and off.

Then at the camping place, before you prepare your meal, you may want to wash your hands with water but, of course, you don't like to use your tea-billy as a wash-basin (Or do you?). A plastic shower cap in the pack is neither weight nor bulk. Filled with water it stands up like a basin, and it can serve as a container afterwards.

Whenever you are in a chemist's shop, you should ask with innocent blue eyes, whether you could have some empty M & B containers. All sizes are welcome. There is nothing better to carry sugar, salt, tea, powdered milk, butter or cooked food. But don't forget to label the tins.

Ellen Mautner

THE HISTORY OF THE BUSH CLUB

I EARLY DAYS

JUST about the beginning of the Second World War, Paddy (Pallin) and I were yarning to each other over Paddy's counter when he said to me, or I said to him, "There ought to be a club which does not insist upon camping as part of its activities, and which admits to membership all people who are genuinely interested in the bush, nature study, and that sort of thing; and it ought to include rock-climbing, boating, walking with children, even with motoring combined, and all sorts of bush interests." Then I said to Paddy, or Paddy said to me, "Let's start such a club", and the other said, "Right". And that was how the Bush Club started. Its first meeting was on 19th September, 1939.

We made its constitution as simple and flexible as we possibly could and we also made it its very basis that there should be no physical test for membership, so that no genuine bush-lover would ever be excluded.

But as it happened some of our early members were eminent rock climbers and skiers from Europe who would have passed any physical tests. We also took over some of the members of what had derisively called itself the H. H. Club which was short for Highbrow Hikers. This club had had among its members many eminent university degrees, but also one or two who were rather amateurish when it came to bush craft, and that was why it had called itself Highbrow Hikers. However, those of its members who became members of the new Bush Club soon became very good bush men and women if they had not been so before.

Thus the first tradition of the bush Club was that its members were really truly bush lovers and not merely people who wanted to dash through the bush quicker than anyone else without time to look at things. Its early walks were usually led by people who were able to give information about the fauna and flora of the bush and it has always had several scientists among its members, who really do know something about the flowers, animals, insects or rocks.

The second tradition which grew up was that the Bush Club was cosmopolitan in its membership, and always ready to hold out the hand of international good will. This came about because as the War increased in horror all foreigners fell under suspicion, and eventually were forbidden to leave their homes overnight. This meant that camping was out of the question, and the Bush Club, which did not insist upon camping, was the only one able to welcome such people to its ranks. Thus the Bush Club has the proud distinction of never letting a narrow patriotism interfere with the friendship of bushlovers.

The Club took a room in Hunter Street where it met monthly. Then something happened, I've forgotten what, and it had to give up the Sydney meeting place. It was then that it took to meeting in the homes of members, and so established the friendly idea that the Bush Club was one family.

Older members will be sad that the Club has grown so large it cannot easily be accommodated in anyone's house nowadays. Change and

growth are inevitable and this is no reason why the old traditions should not continue. The Bush Club is still one of the leading clubs in conservation matters—there is never any doubt as to what the Bush Club will decide when it is a matter of supporting some conservation project. At one time the Bush Club mapped the area needed for recreation in the Ku-ring-gai and Eastwood municipalities and its work now figures on the Cumberland County Council's plan. No one has ever appealed to it in vain for support in any movement for preservation of Bush Lands. It has also been a Club beyond reproach in the matter of Bush etiquette. Bush Club members never leave their camp sites untidy. They always burn, bash and bury all their rubbish and their tins and hide their bottles as they would their sins. And of course they always put out their camp fires with water, even on a wet day. Their members have done some spectacular rock climbing, as for instance the Spires and Kanangra. But they have not taken part in any Marathon races, and I hope they never will.

The tradition of the Bush Club is that of genuine love of the bush, the desire to protect it, and willingness always to extend the hand of friendship to any bush-lover regardless of race, colour, sex religion or politics.

Marie B. Byles
(Written for the Tenth Anniversary
Of the Bush Club 19/9/49)

HAIL CALEDONIA 1

THERE'S a milestone by the roadside near Inverness, in the north of Scotland, marking a spot where Dr Johnson and Boswell once spent a night. Dr Johnson is reputed to have said that the best thing about Scotland was the road back to England - but don't believe it. Scotland has about everything - mountains, valleys and lakes (they call them lochs). Loch Ness, the largest in Scotland, is 66 miles in circumference (not exactly round, of course), and is fed by six rivers. It was on this Loch that Cobb, the speedboat champion, lost his life in 1952 while trying to break another record. At one end of the Loch, at Fort Augustus, stands a large Benedictine Monastery, and the monks solemnly declare that there really is a "monster", for some of them have seen it. A current tourist postcard shows this creature as a huge kind of sea serpent, dubbed by the locals "Nessy".

To refresh your geography, Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in the British Isles, is also in Scotland. It is only 4,406 feet, a hill compared with the Himalayas or Alps, but still the Scots are proud of it, and rightly so. At risk of being thought tedious here are some notes from my diary:-

"21/7/55 - Exactly six months since I left Australia! Misty morning at Glen Nevis - decided at twenty to eleven to climb Ben Nevis - reached the summit in three hours, not bad going. Good track all the way but very stony, especially last part of ascent, all scree and hard on feet. Exhilarating feeling walking above clouds - came to fairly large loch on shoulder between hump and Ben Nevis itself - snow lying in deep drift not far from summit - ate handfuls to quench thirst but not very satisfying, did not care for taste. At summit saw ruins of old observatory built about 1884. Told that for three consecutive summers man used to climb mountain to make weather observations every day. Mists and clouds cleared - wonderful views particularly from north face - sheer cliffs of red rock and in distance peak after peak of the Scottish mountain chain. Thrilled to be able to climb the Ben in such perfect weather. Made descent with an English lass - took steep short cut, all scree and literally slid down for hundreds of feet - did not like it much so got back on proper track. Arrived back at hostel tired and dirty but after a wash and a meal felt fine - had wonderful day."

I must also mention Scotland's beautiful glens - really small, narrowish valleys usually with a stream running through - lovely places to go "a roaming in the gloamin'" (now don't get ideas). Glen Lyon, near Fortingall in the Scottish Highlands, is one of the loveliest. To quote from my diary again:-

"...started off on a delightful walk through Glen Lyon - surprised by the variety of wild flowers - delicate blue harebells, wild purple violas, tall foxgloves and masses of yellow musk. Hillsides covered with bell-heather-like purple mist. Ben Lawers (4,000 feet) dominates the Glen. District once a Roman encampment - saw remains of one of their well constructed bridges. Local legend says Pontius Pilate born here, but very much doubt it. In churchyard saw yew trees reputedly 3,000 years old."

"Queen's View" from Loch Tummel seen in the gloaming (that delightful soft, Scottish twilight aforementioned - it's not dark in summer until 10 p.m.) is a sight never to be forgotten. Nearby hills, fir-covered down to the waters edge (the area belongs to the Forestry Department) merge, in the distance, into shadowy purple peaks and the setting sun lights the mirrored surface of the lock with a transient, rosy glow. Do not miss Strathtummel if you go to Scotland; it's seven miles from Pitlochry, a charming highland town, not far from the Pass of Killicrankie (remember your history, and the battle?). I could ramble on ad infinitum, there's so much to tell - about the day Agnes and I met nine little piglets trotting along the road to Cushieville and how we shepherded them back, after much effort, into their sty, or the time in a northern hostel when I inadvertently wandered into the wrong dormitory while my head was hung preoccupiedly over a map - just as well! But I have to think of the other contributors, not to mention the readers. I'm not like Dr Johnson, I enjoyed every bit of Scotland and liked the kindly, hospitable people; I felt I really belonged there. (You've guessed it - my clan is the Macpherson).

Dorothy Bryant