

WALKS

&

TALKS

The Magazine of the Bush Club

Issue N° 23



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I feel very honoured being President of the Bush Club in the year which is now drawing to a close, and am pleased to report that in many respects the year has been an active and successful one.

It began with our 21st Birthday Celebrations, when our co-founder Miss Marie Byles spoke of the early beginnings of our club, when we were known as the Highbrow Hikers.

At Easter we travelled our longest distance, over 700 miles by coach to the Warrumbungles. A record number of members, 32 persons in all, making the trip a most memorable one. During the year attendances at meetings have set new records, the average being 42, which is very pleasing. Day walks have been as popular as ever, with over 20 members out very frequently.

We have been more interested in our National Parks, and have followed closely the presentation of the National Parks Act, now before Parliament, and noted its slow progress.

We welcome the return of 7 members from Central Australia, while very soon another group will be leaving for W.A., so that shortly it will be impossible to mention a part of Australia that some member of the Club has not visited.

The Committee has been an outstanding team and have carried out their duties in an efficient manner. Special mention must be made of Assistant Secretary Barry Davis, who spares no effort to present the minutes of the meetings thoroughly yet briefly. The social committee has been very busy and we are very fortunate in having Myrell, who is an outstanding organizer, as she has proved many times.

Our New Year begins on the 19th. Of Sept. May it be an active and enjoyable one for all.

Gordon Robinson

The Bush Club celebrated its 22nd Birthday on Saturday the 2nd. September, at Balmoral. Great credit goes to Myrill who thought of the place, arranged for permission to hold it there, and prepared an original and very delightful barbecue meal. The site was very well chosen - a quiet bay, clean grass, very pleasant surrounds, a pretty beach and quite convenient to transport. It was good to see so many turn up, although all the brave South Sydney dwellers had to leave home in rain. Luckily that does not deter the Bush Club.

Howard brought a big load of good burning logs, so that besides unlimited firewood, we had seating accommodation, and firewood over. Others brought smaller wood, Gordon did a great job of carrying and he and Barry and Howard were in charge of the cooking arrangements and coffee. All hands turned out to help cook the goodies, and we had quite a good camp-fire before the rain started again about nine o'clock. Wally brought his tent, so that people had a place to keep things dry in an emergency. Good team work all round.

HAPPY CAMPING, HAPPY WALKING,

(Mrs.) Nance Stillman
Hon. Ed. XB1761
2 Rose Avenue
NORTH SYDNEY

THE BUSH CLUB
Hon-Sec.'s Report - Year ended 5.8.61

The Committee has worked well together as a team this year, with no changes except when Betty Garvin left on an overseas trip, and her place was taken by Joan Macken. We have also had to do without one of our Vice Presidents, Alan Catford, for a few months, while he has been working in Tasmania, but we hope to have him back with us again shortly.

Membership now stands at 74. The 21st. Birthday reunion was responsible for some former members rejoining, and the trip to Central Australia resulted in a new member. Four former members have returned from overseas and re-joined our walks and camps, but three other active members have gone away from Australia for the time being.

We lost one member, John Rane, in tragic circumstances, when he was drowned in the Williams River near Barrington.

The walks continue to be well attended, with particularly large roll-ups on some of the day walks. The record so far is 30. This was on a walk led by Eric Cadzow from Cowan to Mt. Cliff, which included transport down Jerusalem Bay in small boats. 30 also turned up on the children's walk in late July, which was a new idea for the Bush Club, and judging by the result, the beginning of a permanent one. The largest attendance for a camp was the Easter trip to the Warrumbungles, when there were 32. New areas visited include Newnes, Joadga Morton Primitive Area, Budawang Range, as well as the Warrumbungle National Park.

Our Federation delegates attend meetings regularly. Max Rosentool has been re-elected Federation Hon. Sec. and Gordon Robinson is again on the Federation Committee. Our Club was well represented at the reunion this year, at Burning Palms, and carried out the job of preparing and serving the supper. Many helpers made light work.

We have an active delegate to the National Parks Association, Rosalie Graham, who keeps us informed of the doings of that body.

Another photographic competition was held this year, which aroused much interest and brought forth many high quality slides and prints.

We were fortunate to have Dr. Bell from Sydney University Anthropology Department to lecture to us at one of our meetings, his subject being the aborigines round the Sydney area.

The Committee thanks all members for their support and ready cooperation in all activities, and we look forward to another year of comradeship in our enjoyment of the bush.

Flora Graham - Hon-Secretary

Search and Rescue are holding another week-end camp towards the end of October. The Bush Club are going to demonstrate WET Crossings - This is not to be confused with falling in the creek or paddling, either with or without foot gear.

Come along and learn how to bandage heads, signal to aeroplanes, cure indigestion (after eating burnt offerings) and a whole lot of other Things Every Bush Walker Should Know. The camp will be on the Upper Colo, and there may be a bus from Artarmon to the camp site. Further particulars in the October circular.

LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK - QUEENSLAND

Binna Burra.

(Frank Macken)

The park occupies about 75 square miles on the Macpherson ranges not large compared to the Yellowstone Park of the U.S.A., which covers over 3000 square miles, but acclaimed by botanists and naturalists as a wonderland of beauty and interest. Early enthusiasts had opened up a view of this country by cutting a trail through the rainforest jungle for 17 miles along the ridges of the MacPherson Ranges. It was found that the tops of the ranges were covered with ancient trees such as the Arctic Beeches, over 2000 years old, and covered with silver moss and lichens.

In 1909 a very small part of the park had been proclaimed, but it was not until 1930 that continuous propaganda and protest meetings resulted in the setting up of a committee of National Parks Association. In 1930 the rest of the Lamington Plateau was added, as a result of public agitation, but only after such irreparable damage had been done by farming and timber getting. Cedar and other valuable timbers were cut and left to rot when unable to be taken out.

It was decided to build a lodge on the peak of the range, to be called Binna Burra Lodge, meaning "the place of the beech trees" in aboriginal lore. It was a difficult battle to raise money in the depression times of 1930, but the first big camp was held on the Binna Burra site in 1933 on the Kings Birthday week-end. Only a goat track existed up to the 600 ft. crest, and all the stores and even the roofing iron had to be carried up the track. Later a graded track of 1 in 11 was dug, and later a horse and sled added to the equipment. By Easter 1934 a slab and shingle hut was finished and a flying fox installed to bring up equipment over the top of the goat track climb. A dining hall and recreation room was added in this, the wettest year on record.

All this time the walking tracks were continually being plotted and graded by Romeo Lahey, who had tremendous vision for survey and grading of easy walking tracks, by means of many hairpin turns and bends. The lodge was now in business as a guest house with a difference, and geologists and scientists and eminent people came and went, as also did steadily increasing general public.

It is noteworthy that the MacPherson ranges contain discoveries in Nature, equal to the greatest, the grandest and the oldest of the Americas. It was in 1937 that the Queensland Forestry Dept. went forward with a scheme to spend many thousands of pounds on graded walking tracks, and this was a tremendous step. By 1945 over 100 miles of graded pathways were completed with proper signposts and fireplaces.

Lamington really hit the news of the world when in 1937 a Stinson airliner from Brisbane to Sydney, vanished while flying over the MacPherson ranges, with their cyclonic winds and storms. Searches by land and air had failed to find the missing plane, but eight days later, Bernard O'Reilly, having carefully studied all available reports set out towards Mt. Widgee, and found discolored area of jungle, and steep ridges. After super-human efforts he was able to locate the plane with two survivors, and eventually lead a rescue party to bring them out the ten miles of steep jungle covered ranges.

O'Reilly's Guest House is about 14 miles from Binna Burra, connected by well marked and well graded tracks. Here, many native birds are fed, and the scenery is even grander than at Binna Burra. Spring is perhaps the best time in this area, but it is good at all times and perhaps Queensland's best known National Park.

GRAND CANYON TRACK

All my life I have wanted to see the Grand Canyon of Arizona.

After sojourning for the summer months in Montreal, I had allowed myself several weeks to cross North America to reach my homeward bound ship on the west coast. It was quite a difficult decision, whether to go by Greyhound Bus across Canada and have a chance to see the Rockies, or cross the U.S.A., and behold the Grand Canyon. But the latter course won---by a whisker.

I can't praise too highly the organization of the Greyhound buses, which travel the length and breadth of the States. They are frequent, reliable and comfortable, you do not need to book and can break your journey wherever and whenever you please.

With my through ticket to San Francisco, which worked out surprisingly cheap, I set off on my journey westward in mid October. I didn't waste much time in the crossing as I wanted as much time as possible in the colourful western states of Colorado and Arizona. En route to Flagstaff, which is the jumping off point for visitors to the canyon, we passed many ramshackle Indian settlements with igloo shaped houses - the hogans of the Navajo tribe -- and their colourful and distinctive rugs hung out on show. I really got the feel of the old western trading towns when I noted some of the trading posts with such descriptive names as No Scalpum Pow Pow, Chief Joe, Howdy Hank and Minnetonka.

Flagstaff itself is an attractive oasis-like settlement at the base of the hills. After staying overnight, I got the early morning bus for the two hour drive to the Grand Canyon. On the way we passed through a high plateau of the forest and in the distance could see the snow covered San Francisco Peaks.

I booked in at the Bright Angel Lodge. It is built of wood, ranch-style, and from the back of the Lodge one looks straight out on to the Canyon. Chipmunks and squirrels scuttle about, and blue jays hop along the ledge, making a delightful foreground to the majestic sight one looks out upon. In the afternoon I went out for a two hour tour of the west rim, gaining magnificent views across to the other side, and tantalizing glimpses of the mighty Colorado River, far below. In the evening the Hopi Indians performed some of their ceremonial dances, including the very colourful Eagle Dance.

Before I went to sleep that night, I had decided that I simply must take the mule trip to the bottom of the Canyon. So, next morning I borrowed jeans and hat and, with overnight possessions in a small canvas bag, set off on muleback down the track. There were eight of us in charge of the young guide Johnny, a Mexican T.V. type cowboy. We were quite, a mixed party, including a man working at the San Diego Zoo (who asked me if I knew any emu farms!), a garrulous woman who gleefully announced how scarey it was every time the track narrowed, a plump perspiring, camera-bedecked typical male American tourist, and the secretary to the Austrian Vice-Chancellor -- the only other "foreigner" -- who was continually exhorting his steed to greater efforts, much to the disgust of my staid old mule Charley, in front, whom nothing would hurry.

Horses would be completely unreliable on these narrow, steep places and tracks, and the sure footed mules are carefully trained for the Canyon tracks.

I cannot hope to describe views we had as the mule party wound its way down the steep, zigzag Bright Angel Trail--looking back at the sheer red cliffs we had slowly traversed and ahead at the multi-coloured bluffs and crags, with the geological layers clearly defined.

After two hours we stopped for a sandwich lunch at the Indian Garden, a woody plateau with cottonwood trees, then continued down through cacti country. Six of the seven climatic belts are represented in this region and the temperature at the bottom is always more than 20° higher than at the rim. We finally reached the charming, fast-flowing Colorado River, the second longest in America which, though a mile below the rim we had come from, is still 2,500 ft. above sea level!

We followed along the narrow trail literally carved out of the red cliffs which tower up each side of the river, and crossed it by the Kaibab Suspension Bridge. Then up the Bright Angel Creek a short distance to the Phantom Ranch, passing a government survey station on the way - about the only habitations at the Canyon bottom. All building materials, with the exception of one helicopter load, had come down the same way - by mule train.

At the Ranch a cup of hot coffee soon revived us and my bow legs were straightened out once again by a swim in the small icy pool, followed by a hot shower. In the evening I wandered a little way the side canyon, examining the colourings in the rock face. A geologists' paradise this, with some of the oldest rock in the world the pink and white granite and the black, shining schist.

The sun goes early in the depths of the Canyon, as fairly soon after a hearty dinner, we tumbled stiffly into our beds in the little separate lodges. Next morning we breakfasted early and were mounted and ready for the trail by 8 a.m. It was quite cold as we started up the Kaibab Trail and to my relief I found it was easier on my aching legs going up than down.

On the way up the Tonto Plateau, we saw wild mule, deer and several burros, crossed the windy ridge and came on Cedar Ridge where we had a breathing spell and fossicked around looking for fossils. I found a wonderful example of a fern fossil, but unfortunately it was rather too weighty to souvenir!

Early in the afternoon we once more reached the top of the South Rim, after a round trip of approx. nineteen miles. The trip had been the last major extravagance in my world travels and worth every dollar of it - even though I did have to eat off the mantelpiece for the next few days.

After one more day wandering happily around the Canyon on my own, I headed reluctantly for San Francisco, where I had a date with a liner. But if ever again I have the chance to return to the USA it is not to the over-rated New York, nor the charming San Francisco that I would head for, but the state of Arizona - with its endless fascinations of red hills and deserts, its petrified forests and its untamed and wildly magnificent canyon country.

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Janet Stevenson

NATIONAL PARKS

In the last issue of Walks and Talks we wrote about the Warrumbungle National Park, one of the best parks in NSW. In this issue Frank has written about the beautiful Lamington National Park in Queensland, and Alan has been exploring the beauties of the "Reserve" in Tasmania. (unfortunately owing to lack of space he has been left on Windy Ridge until next issue). Next issue also will contain an interesting article about the Bouddi National Reserve, from Miss Marie Byles, one of the main movers in getting this beautiful area set apart as a Reserve.

We all like walking and camping in these parks.

HAVE YOU JOINED THE ASSOCIATION YET?

"THE RESERVE"

The full title is lengthy; Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park. It is much easier and more affectionate to call it simply "The Reserve," and every bush-walker worth his salt will know what you mean.

Start from the northern end and the general trend is "downhill." This does not mean that you can coast all the way; there are some ups and down, some of the ups being steep enough, but not really severe. Most of the track is along ridge-tops and valley floors between impressive mountains. But first let us look at our historic starting-point - Waldheim, forest home, creation of Gustav Weindorfer, the lonely Australian who loved the forest and the animals and birds of this strange new land, and was content to dwell in peace in the mountain chalet he had built with his own strong hands. There is an agreeable fudeness about Waldheim's hand-split timbers, and this appeal is supported and made complete by the presence of jovial bearded Franz Eselbok, the present "mine host." Whose stocky, leather-clad form lends an authentic backwoods air to the place, while his love for the trusting wild life must surely be no less than that of Weindorfer himself. Half-tame possums forage at night for food-scrapes; with care, their beautifully thick soft fur may be stroked, while they accept tit-bits. Wallabies haunt the grounds and are fed by their protector and watchful black currawongs, with their raucous but musical vocalism, remind us that here, indeed, is Tasmania.

The area around the Chalet and Cradle Mountain is particularly grand and beautiful, and walkers who do not care to tote heavy packs can easily spend an active week doing day walks and climbs. Cradle Mountain is itself an easy climb; like most of the other mountains along the track, it is just a stiff scramble. The famous dolerites, the rock whose regular vertical columns lend form and distinction to these mountains, makes some mighty scree and picking ones way across the stony slopes is rock-hopping extraordinary. At the base of Cradle Mountain we met a group of young fellows from the Launceston Walking Club, who had just completed a skyline traverse of the mountain. From the ground it looks impossible to negotiate that crazy contour.

Dove Lake in the still of early morning is the perfect mirror for Cradle Mountain, set grandly at its southern end. It is mountain of amazing appearance, more lunar than earthly. Crater Lake nearby is in a deep pit formed by towering walls, and is a gem of a pool. (It is not an extinct volcanic crater). But to me, the quintessence of loveliness in the Tasmanian tarns is distilled by a little in inter-connected group called the Twisted Lakes, high up beyond Hansons Peak, and below the towering north end of the Cradle. They form a idyll like something out of a fairytale, with the charm of rippled water, brown and blue and purple with the admixture of vegetable dye and sky reflection, of the bright green of little pencil pines hugging the shore, of plunging rock-walls and a pair of little grebe, floating and diving.

All too soon we had to leave these wonderful places, for time demanded that we take up our heavy packs and go, on the first long leg of the long trail southward. We passed under the west side of Cradle Mountain, dwarfed by its towering ramparts, and headed straight for Barn Bluff, which is separated from the Cradle by a long col, or perhaps better regarded as part of a high conglomerate plateau which figures largely in the physiography of the Park. Then down into Waterfall Valley, where a very pleasant night was spent in the new Waterfall Hut. Moonlight softly illuminating a field of tussocky grass, rendered impressive the peak of Barn Bluff, cut off from the north by a band of mist, and spread beauty over the night. The giant sigh of a night wind

made us grateful for sturdy timer walls, dry bunks, and warm sleeping bags.

Next morning an ambition of 20 years was realized: we climbed Barn Bluff. It is not hard for the agile, and the view from the strange solitary mountain us worth while. Lake Will is prominent below, large and beautiful, its mellow shores white-rimmed with beaches. The top of Barn Bluff is typical of all the mountain peaks in this country - big columns of dolerite, mostly vertical, but some fallen or leaning at various angles. Rangers have marked the best route by little rock cairns, or "steinmanner" (stone-men) as they are known on the continent.

In the afternoon we left Barn Bluff and Cradle Mountain behind, romantic blue shapes in the north, and crossed a typical stretch of highland country - some forest, some button-grass plain, passing many small turns, and finally dropping to Lake Windermere, where we spent the night. Lake Windermere is a lovely thing, fringed by pencil pines and snow gums, and studded with tiny islands - a typical highland tarn. The hut is a commodious affair of two rooms, with the usual two-tiered bunks. Here again we were surprised to find tame-wild animals, wallabies that showed no fear at close approach, and possums that come down from the trees to be hand-fed. The evening bath in the lake, a necessary but terrifying ritual performed with groansome regularity, was, as always a Spartan procedure. On this occasion, however, its sting was softened by the delight of moon upon water and the wild beauty of wind-torn cloud in a lightened sky.

Between Windermere and the Old Pelion huts, we encountered our first rain; and so saw our first rain-forest as it usually is -wet! We were awakened next morning in Old Pelion Hut by repeated and violent scratching on the new iron roof above our heads. At last the mug got up to investigate, and returned to report, to everyone's surprise a wedge-tailed eagle.

I saw the giant bird fly off into the morning gloom. It had been a wild night of northerly wind and rain, but later in the morning it cleared, and we set out, as planned, across the Pelion Plains to climb Mt. Oakleigh, whose remarkable profile is so impressive from the hut. Beyond the plain, the way is through green and mossy rain-forest, up through the giant Riches pandanifolia (largest of the heaths), and so on to the open shrub-covered rock, top of the mountain. Lemon-scented boronia grows here, and this, crushed by hand or underfoot, provides yet another pleasure for the insatiable aesthete. But the real piece de resistance of Mt. Oakleigh is the group of huge monolithic dolerite columns which form the north-west buttresses, overlooking Pelion Plains and the beginning o the mighty Forth Gorge. I suppose the largest of these slabs would be two or three hundred feet high, perhaps more.

We continued south next day, passing the attractive multi-roomed hut known as Pelion Chalet, and managed the long slow pull up to the Pelion Gap by lunchtime. This is a fine open col separating Mount Pelion East from Mount Ossa, Tasmania's highest (about 5300 ft). Little Pelion East, rising above us in the clear blue sky, was a must, and we were soon on top enjoying a breath-taking panorama of the peaks all round. Shaped like a breast and nipple, and reminiscent of Pigeon House, it is a distinctive landmark.

For some unaccountable reason I was the only one who was warm in Du Cane Hut that night - unaccountable because I was by far the sparest of the party. This hut seems to have a reputation for bone-penetrating chilliness. For the first time we had some company here, a party moving north. Next morning we left the little hut, cowering beneath the battlements of Castle Crag, and plunged into rain-forest. A diversion (without packs) down an incredible steep slope to Ferguson Falls proved worthwhile. The waters of the Mersey River here pour over a dome shaped rock, which reminds one somewhat of the Bridal Veil falls at Leura, and into a fine deep pool, ideal except for the cold thereof, for swimming.

The river then cuts its way through a deep narrow canyon like the Grand Canyon in the Blue Mountains NSW. A natural bridge of fallen rock further enhances the intriguing quality of the latter. The rest of this day's walk is varied and pleasing, through broad valleys, up and over the Du Cane Gap, and down through beautiful rain-forest to the peaceful seclusion of Windy Ridge. From the hut here can be seen the striking towers of Mount Geryon, silhouetted against the sunset.

Alan Catford (concluded next issue)

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A TRIP TO THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Flew from Sydney to Mackay, via Brisbane, where I embarked on a Roylen cruiser bound for Brampton Island. As the first part of the trip was rather rough, we were glad to reach the shelter of the islands. Brampton Island has good accommodation and services, and a very good beach - in fact we found that this was so with all the inhabited islands. In the days that followed we passed many uninhabited islands, some of them carrying colonies of goats, which are said to have been put there as a help to shipwrecked sailors. The islands are mountainous and rocky, the largest being Whitsunday Island, in the Whitsunday Passage. Captain Cook named it as he passed along the passage on his voyage of discovery.

We spent some time at South Molle, inspecting a very good shell collection and a small zoo. There are five Roylen Cruisers and they usually spend each night in a sheltered cove among the many islands. Quite often there is good fishing after tea, and on some occasions parties collect oysters. Unfortunately, the tide prevented a visit to the outer reef, but there is plenty to see, as well as swimming, sun-baking and shell-collecting.

We called at Hayman Island with its little train to take tourists from the jetty to the accommodation. Here there is a luxury hotel, shop, swimming-pool and gardens. During the trip we were able to photograph corals through glass bottom boats, and the whole holiday was well organized and comfortable.

We returned to MacKay via Brampton Island once more, and then caught the plane back to Sydney, stopping at Brisbane overnight.

...oOo... Victor Gordon

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was smaller than usual, as several of our members were away in Central Australia. Gordon was re-elected Hon.-Pres., and Barry has become our new Hon. Sec. with Helen as Assist. Hon. Sec. Alan Sugarman is about to leave for Israel, so Nance Still took over the job of Hon. Treasurer (no other takers). Howard is Vice President again, and we are glad to welcome Eckart Hill back as the other Vice President. It is nice to have our old members with us again. Grateful thanks go to Myrrill, our excellent Social Secretary, who seems to have all the answers about social organization and functions. She resigned of course, but was instantly re-elected, and fortunately other members soon rallied as helpers. Flora is our members representative on the committee, which makes her third year. Other members were elected to various positions representing the club, and merit a hearty vote of thanks for the time they so kindly donate on the club's behalf.

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