

WALKS



TALKS



The Magazine of the  
Bush Club

In the last few months the Bush Club has been very active. The camps and walks have been particularly interesting and well patronized (except for the occasions when Sydney is flooded out!) and the Winter and Spring Walks Schedule gives promise of many excellent walks to come.

On the social side we must particularly thank Flora and Peggy for organizing theatre outings and the Grahams for throwing open their home to the tender mercies of the Club one enjoyable evening.

At the May meeting we had one of the most interesting talks we have had for some time. Mr. S.G. Lane gave us a talk on the birds of N.S.W., illustrating with coloured slides the catching of birds for banding purposes. This lesser known activity of ornithologists assists in finding out about their migration habits. Mr. Lane answered our questions afterwards and cleared up once and for all the burning question of when is a mopoke not a mopoke. The answer - when it's a Boobook. Colo campers please note.

I have had encouraging remarks on the last issue of WALKS & TALKS, which was the first in its new roneod form. Please help me keep it the magazine you like to read by contributing articles which you feel other members might enjoy reading. Our members have varied interest, hobbies and experiences, so perhaps you might like to tell us about one of yours?

In this issue is an article from Nancy Shaw who is now more or less settled back in England. If any of you have news of other ex-members and would like to share it with the Club, please let me have it for publication.

Janet Stevenson

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PYMBLE

(Editor)

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GHOSTS OF THE CAPERTEE

Barry Davis

I never knew anyone who worked at Glen Davis when the shale mines and processing plant were functioning. After our Easter camp in this area I now feel I know some of the characters who spent time there.

Maybe I would never have "met" them if it hadn't been for a bloke who was with us bringing an old rust shovel into camp. He was given it at the ruins of the plant. Given it by the ghost, I'd say; his brand of humour and theirs would be about the same. I reckon they arranged it with him to have something in our camp for them to home on.

Those who lived in the town in years gone by enjoyed their leisure more than they did the energetic things of life. I got to know more of them while taking it easy in camp than getting around on our walks, though a few of their spirits joined us when we were on the move. They arranged some mild quicksand on Running Stream Creek to allow us to sink to the knees on a solid looking surface. Grassy Mountain wasn't grassy. It had millions of small lumps of basalt all over it to keep us on our toes. Tyan Pic was a bit too tough for them: they didn't tackle the two thousand odd feet climb, but got some amusement by guiding a few walkers onto a wrong ridge on the descent, delivering them to a sheer drop to the valley below. On a rush walk at Running Stream Creek they showed us some of the biggest tracks of kangaroos I have ever seen but kept the 'roos well hidden. We didn't see one. But the birds on the Creek must have had some alliance with the transparent people; we were allowed to see all manner and number of them.

The time they enjoyed most was in camp. They joined us and had great fun. Just because their mate the shovel carrier had helped them find us didn't mean he was spared. Some of the party were inspired to ask him to repeat the orders of the day over and over again and to interrupt with

questions before he had finished. How he retained his sanity, only the ghosts could explain.

There must have been a chef living in the place once. He came to us and guided a couple of the campers with an exotic rice dish they prepared - he was probably Chinese. The influence of a hungry worker used one of the bodies with us, making him swoop in with a borrowed spoon to grab a taste of the rice as often as he could. The chef's pupils had a busy time cooking and foiling the hungry one.

Star-gazing probably filled some idle hours when Glen Davis had lots of inhabitants. Some with us were selected and made wander out of the circle of firelight and stand with heads well back airing the mysteries and wonders of the constellations. The spirits in their humour allowed one of the astronomers to describe a group of stars and then, after convincing everybody, admit it was wrong.

Photographers are everywhere. The ghosts of the shutter operators selected a keen protégé but forgot how flash bulbs worked. The cameraman stalked his subjects with admirable patience and technique but nearly all attempts failed as the guiding spirit wasn't familiar with flash. Then the "try-anything once" man was inspired to tinker with the setup and just as he was getting into his stride the ghost photographer discovered the workings of flash. The firer was suitably dazzled by a bulb going off just three inches from his nose. I'm sure the spirits were pleased. I later heard them laughing in the darkness of the bush. Somebody said it was a mopoke, but I know better (? Boobook - Ed.).

The stay-up-all-night-types used to live in the Capertee Valley too. Their earthly remainder gathered in some of the group and held them around the pleasant campfire for those laughs and tales that are dear to the hearing of all who gather at a fire in the bush. We were very much in harmony with the spirits in this regard. The music lovers of the bygone days had a chance to join us and give a hand with the singing. Some good voices were heard, which we knew belonged to members of the party, so maybe the ghosts were content to listen, approve and applaud as were those of us who can't sing too well.

A demolisher who came to tear down the plant remained in spirit. The setting, with the high red sandstone cliffs, must have had its effect. He chose someone who was wandering around the camp to trip on the guyline of a tent and beheld the spectacle of the shelter crumpling before him in the moonlight. The inhabitant was quite confused and plaintively enquired whether it was time to get up yet

An old stockman had his fun. He may have been the oldest ghost present. He allowed some of the horses he was mustering to stray near the camp and noisily eat grass near a half-awake camper, making the one, who should have been up anyway, wonder who was operating so close to the tent.

The professional people of the place were with us. The chemist from the works laboratory drifted in to sprinkle the fire with things that burnt with a coloured flame. Nobody could satisfactorily give an explanation. A geologist allowed somebody to find some specimens of shale that, when broken and moved in the sunlight, winked the colours of the spectrum to us from the particles of oil it contained. The rock-cracking spirit lost interest after that because a geologist's hammer had been brought and he was content to admire and drool over it. The giver of good things of the old town must have means of going from the Valley to influence people before they arrive. She selected one to bring an Easter gift that was distributed in the spirit of goodwill and accepted by all with much appreciation.

We left the shovel at the camp site. This must have pleased the Ghosts of the Capertee as now it is in position to guide them to the spot when the next party of campers make it their home for a time. I think we pleased them while we were in residence.

I think it should be recorded, as a matter of interest, that in February, 1962, the Bush Club hired a Halvorsen cruiser and fifteen members enjoyed a very pleasant weekend cruising on the Hawkesbury and Broken Bay.

The weather was perfect and the party embarked at Bobbin Head one Saturday morning at 9 a.m. The cruiser was in excellent condition, very comfortable, roomy and spotlessly clean. The powerful diesel engine was entirely unobtrusive. We found we had plenty of room, and even had it been wet we would not have felt overcrowded. We went a few miles above Wisemans Ferry and a scouting party (ably headed by our ever-watchful Hon. Pres.) selected a likely spot ashore to make a camping party. I think the vessel had berths for about ten, but eight of us preferred the campfire, the bed on the ground and a good walk along the shore, to the softer comforts of gas stove, table and sponge rubber mattresses.

The shore party enjoyed the reflections from the cruiser as she swung at anchor a little off shore, and I expect the party aboard enjoyed the nearby flickering of our campfire, with perhaps an occasional whiff of good wood smoke for old times sake. One member afloat seemed strongly affected by the romantic surrounds and sang sentimental songs until his voice practically cracked.

Next morning after breakfast the anchor was lifted without trouble and the party returned down river, making two calls en route, and then took a turn around American Bay and Refuge Bay before heading up Cowan Creek once more to Bobbin Head.

We finished up with a grand flourish - head on into the jetty - - but no damage. The cruiser was built to withstand shocks and, after all, we are a Bush Club!

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THE OLD COAL AND SHALE MINES OF KATOOMBA

Bushwalkers will be interested in the history surrounding the once busy industry which employed up to 300 men in the vicinity of Katoomba's Narrow Neck. Coal was first mined near the foot of Orphan Rock and shale was mined from Ruined Castle and the Glen shale mine in Megalong.

Now today there is little to show for it other than the "Scenic Railway" beloved mainly by the teenage tourist, and also the easy grade walking track around to Ruined Castle, with remains of rail sleepers embedded with occasional iron spikes or dogs. For the more observant there are to be seen the holes in the cliff seams of the old coal and shale mines, and the steel wire ropes still rusting away.

In 1878 John North opened up the coal seams at the foot of Orphan Rock and in 1882 a track was cut from Katoomba to prospect the Ruined Castle shale seam.

The coal was conveyed by a steep 45 degree tramway to the top of the cliff (Scenic Railway) and thence by a 2 ft. track to a private railway siding  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west of Katoomba - which is now Shell Corner.

In 1885 German engineers were engaged to erect an aerial double-steel wire ropeway 1-1/2 miles long from a ridge near the Ruined Castle to a point near the summit of the Scenic Railway. The arrangement was a conventional ropeway supported on regular timber trestle erections, and followed the levels and sides of the valley. The steel buckets were approximately 3 ft. square and endless traction cables hauled 30 buckets around, but the whole scheme was a failure and less than 500 tons were despatched by this means.

The company now found itself in economic difficulties and in the ensuing years other companies were formed. The Australian Kerosene Oil Co. laid down a double track haulage tramway from the Orphan Rock cliff top

location to Megalong Valley Glen shale mines, a distance of 5 miles. This was a better outlet for the shale than by bullock team to Blackheath. In 1891 a single track horse tramway was constructed by A.K.O. on easy grading round to the Ruined Castle mines in Jamieson Valley.

Shale from the Castle is said to have been classed as among the world's richest, for it produced 60 to 100 gals. per ton. However, shale production ceased in 1895 after 20,000 tons were taken out for export, and 50,000 tons were estimated as being taken out of the Glen shale mines in Megalong. Shale was finished as a profitable venture, the price dropping from over £3 in 1870 to 15/- in 1901. The Glen mines had a brief revival in 1921.

Katoomba Colliery also reopened in 1925 at the old coal mine at the Orphan Rock vicinity, mainly for the local coal trade.

At the foot of Nellie's Glen there was a hotel with 13 rooms. Other buildings were a butcher's shop, a bakery and a public hall, while about 40 families resided nearby. On the Jamieson Valley side at Ruined Castle there were quarters for single men.

On the closing of the mines the settlements faded away. About 1904 a resident of Megalong moved the hotel from Nellie's Glen to Lurline Street, Katoomba, where it still remains today.

The engineering problems of the mines must have taxed the courage and the resources of the enterprising companies in their endeavours to transport coal and shale. The tramways were worked by steam winding engines, established at what is now the upper part of the Scenic Railway, and the surrounding area became known as "Engine Bank." One gully in the section of tramway from Engine Bank to Katoomba North's Siding was crossed by a suspension bridge and the steep rise to the railway siding was on timber trestling.

John Britty North was the first to start mining in the Jamieson Valley despite its inaccessibility to railway transport. In the early days he bought 640 acres of land, which is one square mile, at £1 per acre, the area being covered by a large part of Katoomba today. He built himself a substantial two storey house, surrounded by a lookout tower near the site of the present twin reservoirs at Shell Corner and adjacent to his private rail siding. The house known as Essendene became a girls' school some years after North left. It was eventually destroyed by fire.

At the Engine Bank a number of settlements sprang up. There were three streets of cottages owned by the A.K.O. and also the Centennial Hotel. The hotel continued for many years but was later "The Falls" boarding establishment.

I hope this article will interest the Club in finding out about the early history of more of our popular walking areas.

Compiled by Frank Macken from an article printed in the  
Bulletin of the Australian Railway Historical Society

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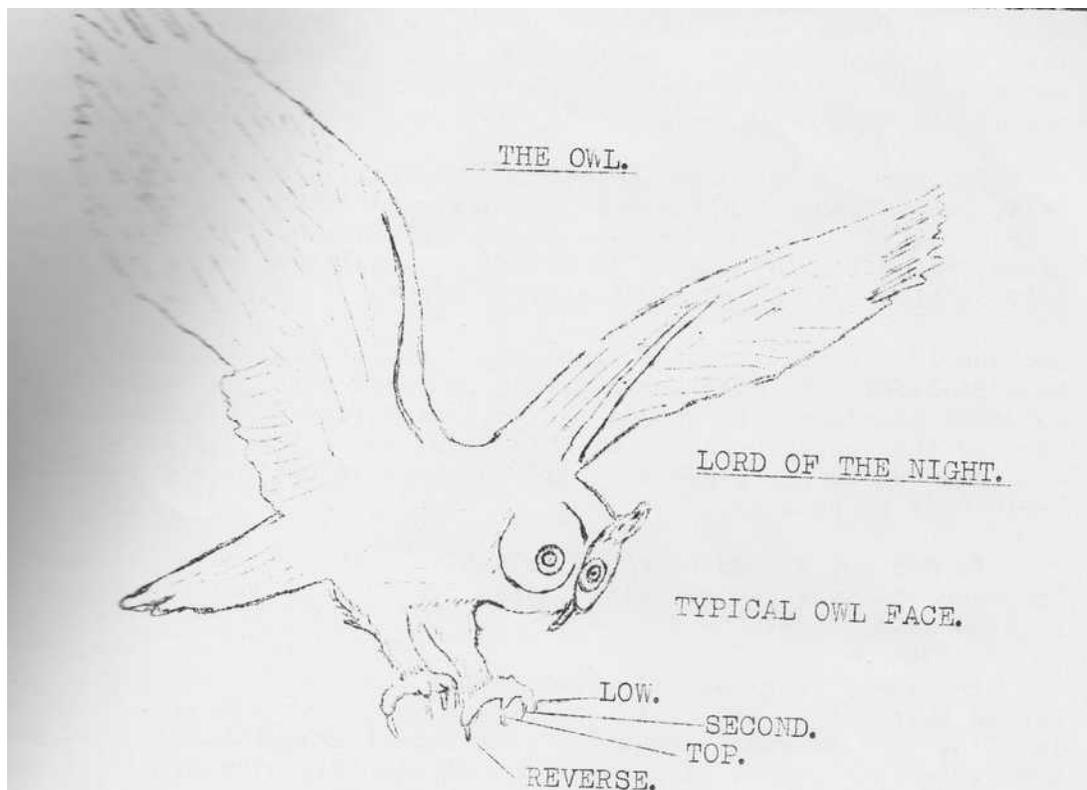
An accident happened to my brother Jim  
When somebody threw a tomato at him -  
Tomatoes are juicy and don't hurt the skin,  
But this one was specially packed in a tin.

ANON

---oOo---

A specialist is a man who keeps on learning more and more about less and less until ultimately he knows everything about nothing, while the politician is a man who keeps on learning less and less about more and more until ultimately he knows nothing about everything.

A Twentieth-century Saying



BY GORDON ROBINSON

Recently, while camped in the foothills of "The Island" (1794 ft), we were sitting around the campfire when we heard an howl in the night, so naturally we concluded we had 'eard an "owl" in the night.

Before you could say "brother Jack" we had turned up night owls in my handy pack pocket size "Australian Bird Book" and by a process of illumination (torch light) and local knowledge the possibilities were soon reduced. For instance, the nearest barn was miles away so it couldn't be the barn own. No soot about so it couldn't be the rare "sooty owl." There were two possibilities - the Tawny Frogmouth and the Boobook Owl.

First a few notes on owls in general. Owls, like cat burglars, are Nocturnal Predators, "Nocturnal" meaning belonging to the night or active at night, "Predators" meaning living by prey or plundering. Popular opinion once divided the owls into screech owls and hoot owls, a division unsuitable because many of the hoot owls also screech, but the screech owls don't give a hoot (now I've confused you). The screech, by the way, is a blood-chilling sound when heard in the bush at night.

The screeching fits of the owls are possibly love calls but to the human ear they are wild and terrifying. Indeed, the screams of the powerful owl have been known to make men rush out to the rescue of a woman apparently being murdered (wouldn't you feel a proper clot!).

The owls have a short, pointed and strongly hooked beak. The owl face is typical and very distinctive, with eyes directly forward instead of sideways as in most other birds, giving the owls true binocular vision. The eyes, however, are not capable of much movement, so the bird turns its head to focus both eyes on the object it wants to see. Another peculiarity of the owl is the possession of an "ear-lid" somewhat like an eye-lid. Owls, like hawks, use their feet both to catch and carry their prey, and they have a reversible fourth toe. So much for owls...

There appears to be some doubt exactly where Frogmouths come in the scheme of things, but the Tawny Frogmouth has been given the name *Podargus strigoides*. Po-dar'gus from the French le-podarge meaning gouty foot (fair dinkum) and strig oil'es "strigos" Greek for owl and "oides" from eidos (the e and o swap places) meaning form or like. So we are lumbered with an owl-like bird with gouty feet. It's no wonder he goes around at night grunting "Oom, oom" - gout can be very painful. If old Tawny didn't suffer from gout, the call would most likely be "oe" or vice-versa.



The next day the 1933 engine gave up again about three miles from the top of the Zigana Pass. It was then nightfall and four of us managed to get a lift back to the last village. Our own mother could not have done more for us than that Shell-tank driver. He was about the nicest man I ever met though he could not speak a word of English. The heavy truck skidded (even with chains) on each hairpin bend but he drove beautifully. It was quite terrifying as his windscreen wiper did not work and there was something wrong with the lights. He took us to the most primitive little wayside inn where there were two or three locals drinking cay (chi) - black tea to you. Hotels never serve food but this one had a little shop and the driver Abdul took us into the shop and showed us the little there was and had us taste everything. We settled for eggs, bread and cheese, so he heated the bread and we made toast and Abdul fried the eggs for us over a brazier he brought in - and we tucked in. Then Abdul and the inn-keeper took us upstairs to the cleanest room I have seen since the Chilton at Quetta, with a blazing hot stove in the middle and a window overlooking the moonlit snow-covered mountains. Abdul looked at all our sheets to see that they were clean (they were - the second time in all Pakistan, Iran or Turkey) and showed us the "tuvalet" and made the boy bring more wood.

We slept in next morning and just as we had finished breakfast Abdul came back from Erzerun in another truck to pick us up and take us to Trabzon. If we had offered him money I know he would have been offended. At the Mobiloil place he beckoned us in, saying English. The superintendant was a Turk who had learnt English for six weeks and was a real personality man. We had cups of cay and then he took us to his modern house nearby to meet his wife and children. He asked us to stay and have some bread and tea with him and bring some of the others whom he sent his chauffeur to fetch. Ten of us sat down to a very nice meal with Turkish beer, whisky and cocktail and he entertained some of us all the next day too but Anne, some others and I went to find the old church of St. Sophie, which is 13<sup>th</sup> Century Byzantine.

Easter Sunday. Thought I would like to go to a Green Orthodox Church service today so called round with Anne to ask the Russian History teacher (whom we had met the previous day) to direct us. She turned out to be a Caucasian Moslem and said the only Christian church in Trabzon was an Italian Catholic one. She and her sister and two friends then turned out and took us to a gate in a wall in one of the funny old narrow twisted streets opening on to a paved courtyard. One rang a bell and an old friar appeared after some time wearing a typical Turkish cap which looked rather odd with his habit (they are like golfer's caps). The service was over but he showed us the church.

Then the history teacher took us in a taxi to one of the oldest churches which was converted into a mosque for hundreds of years. We walked around all morning looking at antiquities and then were brought back to lunch, during which some of the quite fat and plain women got up when they felt like it and danced Turkish folk dances to records in the most spontaneous and graceful way. Even the old granny danced a little. Then we went visiting in another taxi and went over Ataturk's house and had an elaborate "five o'clock" set out on a white cloth on a table in the garden. There was ham, sausage, bread, smoked bacon, two kinds of pastry with meat, two kinds of cheeses, olives, and flavoured rice wrapped in vine leaves to make a kind of sausage. Lots of people kept turning up with their children. I have never spoken so much French in my life on one day though most could only understand Turkish.

The people in Iran are remarkably fair and here too, in Turkey they are fairer than the Greeks or Southern Italians, especially the women. Ataturk, who is still a great hero, tried to Westernise everything so all the men wear wide-peaked golf caps instead of the very funny undented felt hats most worn in Iran.

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Awake! For Morning in the Bowl of Night  
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight;  
And Lo! The Hunter of the East has caught  
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light  
From Edward Fitzgerald's trans. Of RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

SPRING CONFERENCE IN WEST CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY - Nancy Shaw

Early this April I went to Falmouth to attend a conference organised by the Horticultural Education Association for its members who are professionally engaged or interested in the development of Horticultural Education and Research.

West Cornwall is a peninsular which varies in width from less than forty to only four miles between Marzion and Hayle. The central uplands which form the watershed running the length of the county are often cut into deep valleys where rivers flow to tidal estuaries, also here one gets magnificent coastal scenery, of rocky cliffs and narrow coves. As sea is never more than seven miles distant, this is the warmest part of the British Isles in winter and early spring, and frost ceases after the end of March. In summer it is no warmer than southern England as the surrounding seas keep down the temperature; it has an average of over 4-1/2 hours per day of sun and there is very little industrial pollution to darken the skies, Rainfall is fairly high - 35 to 40" near the coast and over 50" in the moors.

Owing to all this Cornwall is well known for producing early flowers consisting of daffodils, anemones and early vegetables -- winter cauliflowers, spring cabbages and early potatoes -- and additional luxuries such as strawberries. But it is an expense getting the produce to markets, which today means by flying to as far afield as Canada and the Scandinavian countries, and by road transport to the home markets.

Our first day started off in state, with the Mayor of Falmouth opening our Conference. Then Mr. Tomlin, a Penzance flower grower, told us his experiences of flower growing in Cornwall since 1926, so putting us in the picture of this Cornish industry. After a hasty cup of coffee, we all loaded into coaches and set off to see farms in the oldest established market garden district, Mount's Bay area, which is all in view of St. Michael's Mount. Our coach went to Mr. Rowe's Farm and he conducted us around his small walled fields of winter cauliflower and anemones and we saw his seed potatoes in old stone barns, mostly not yet planted in, owing to the unusually severe winter, everything was a month late.

Lunch was organized at Penzance's largest restaurant, there being over 120 of us, then in the afternoon we visited Tringwainton Gardens belonging to the Lord Lieut. of Cornwall, Sir Edward Bolitho. These gardens are famous for their vast collection of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias which were in flower. I also saw in flower the New Zealand yellow Kowhai tree and a big bush of bottlebrush so the camera enthusiasts were kept busy.

A welcome cup of tea followed at St. Ives and we all rushed down to have a look at the old harbor. Then our final visit for the day was to Mr. James' winter cauliflower fields on the windy heights near Gwithian. Mr. James kept his men late that evening to show us how they pack cauliflowers for market 16 to 18 heads in a box. On our route home along the North Cornish coast, we passed sand dunes which consist of pulverized shells.

Our second day was an all day visit to Rosewarne Experimental Station near Camborne. These Horticultural Experimental Stations serve as a link between Research Institutes and growers by testing the findings of research under various soils and climatic conditions and dealing with local problems. We made a tour on tractor trailers with bales of straw as soft cushioned seats. For different types of shelter against wind, 400 species of hedges had been planted to protect crops and amongst the daffodil trials they had 1,200 varieties.

The third and last day we started with a photo talk on trees and shrubs and amongst them were the Australian waratah and the tree fern.

Our lunch at Truro consisted of a buffet meal of Cornish pasties, which consist of raw meat, potato, onion and cabbage cooked slowly in a flakey pastry case. When I was handed one, it felt like a pound weight, but we all managed to eat a whole pasty. After lunch our coaches took us to an enterprising West Country family Flower Farm at Kea near Truro. This was

followed by a Cornish tea of splits and strawberry jam and cream, and a visit to a strawberry farm where we saw soil-warming by means of electricity. So ended our time in West Cornwall...

Some of us were going on to the Isles of Scilly the next day. It was a sunny day and after a 40 mile sea trip from Penzance we arrived at midday at Hugh Town, St. Mary's.

There are five inhabited islands 28 miles W.S.W. of Lands End. St. Mary's is the largest with 1,200 people, St. Martin and Tresco have 300 each and Bryher and St. Agnes under 100 each. The islander-owned R.M.V. "Scillonian" is the main link with the mainland, which, together with the little twin-engined "Rapides" flown by B.E.A., bring visitors in addition to carrying the islands' produce across 40 miles of sea to the mainland.

We were met at the Quay by an assortment of vehicles which took us to our various hotels or guest houses and after lunch we were taken to visit flower farms. Bulbs are grown in squares which vary in size according to the area of land available; the squares are bordered with hedges about 15 feet high. After dinner we were invited to the local hall and shown colour slides of the islands' activities, such as the May Day celebrations.

Next day we gathered at the Quay for our launch to Tresco. The Quay is small and all the launch trips appear to start at the same time, so they tie alongside each other and you just climb from one to the other until you get to the one for whichever isle you are going to.

Our crossing proved a bit wetting but quite enjoyable. After a picnic lunch we all gathered at Tresco Abbey Gardens. These are sub-tropical gardens which have grown and come to wonderful maturity around the remains of the old Benedictine priory of St. Nicolas and the new Tresco Abbey. In 1834 there were no trees or gorse bushes, but Augustine Smith planted many Monterey pines and since then seeds and plants have come from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand and have grown and grown! Fifty feet tall banksias, the largest I have seen, various wattles, several gum trees, silky oak, the cabbage tree, tea tree, the N.Z. Christmas tree and the N.S.W. Christmas bush. The rocky hillside setting reminded us of the Australian bush though the Monterey pines did rather envelop the gum trees.

On our last day we volunteers braved another launch trip to St. Martin's Island which had lovely views, but the cold windy day kept us on the move and we had a walking tour before returning in time to catch the "Scillonian" back to Penzance. And there we ended our gathering and departed our various ways.

