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No. 2

WALKS AND TALKS

The Magazine

Of

THE BUSH CLUB

A Word from the President

In this second number of WALKS AND TALKS I would like to say thank you to all those who have made its production possible by their encouragement and advice, and in particular to those who have given up their time to write something to appear in these pages.

I hope you will enjoy reading this number as much as I have enjoyed preparing it. It is hoped to keep the items varied so that there will be something to interest and amuse everyone. Perhaps you will have been reminded of some experience you have had or trip you have done. If so, please write it down and send it in so we can all share in it. Any suggestions or new ideas for the next issue will be very welcome.

45 Mona Vale Road,
PYMBLE.

Janet Stevenson

(Editor)

THE HISTORY OF THE BUSH CLUB

II

It is to be regretted that practically no records of minutes and other items of the club's doings are able to be traced, and so we only have records from 1946.

Our club, as well as other clubs, felt the result of the 1939-1945 World War, and very little progress was made during that period; however, we met occasionally and organized walks amongst ourselves and so the club was kept together.

When the war ended in 1945 we slowly began to increase our membership and soon there was a demand for more walks and camps. New tracks were made and old ones opened up again once more. It was not long before our members were tramping all over the mountains and around the coastal areas. In 1946 a request was made for a fixed camp over the Christmas period. We visited many areas and at last the camp at Resolute Bay, Pittwater, via Palm Beach was established. Much hard work was put in by a handful of club members, and to this day the same areas are being used, plus the formation of more areas to cope with the number of members wishing to make use of this campsite. I am happy to say that this camp has become a recognized camping area for the Christmas period and has never lost its popularity, and I sincerely trust it will remain a Bush Club campsite for many years to come.

A number of our members have organized long trips going out of the State and to Tasmania, and these have been very successful. On their return we have had the pleasure of seeing the photos taken on these trips.

In spite of the introduction of the car and hitch-hiking means of travel, I am proud to say our Club has stuck to the bush tracks. A few years ago there was a bad rail strike and it was thought advisable to cancel all walks, but the clamour of the members was such that we held the walks, substituting new walks when it was not possible to adhere to those already on the schedule; and it was to the credit of all members that they found ways and means of arriving at the starting place for the walks. This outlook of the members shows the inner strength of the club and speaks for itself.

The club has been through various stages; at one time there was a majority of girls and they were very keen walkers and campers, tackling some very tough trips. Today the tempo has altered a little and we have a slight majority of men members.

Throughout the years the club has maintained a well balanced walks schedule. A great deal of care and thought has always been taken in compiling the schedule so that there is always something for every type of walker and camper, and this method has paid dividends.

The need for guarding our bushlands, and maintaining a vigilance over the areas which have been secured for all bushwalkers by sheer hard work, is still as necessary as the opening up of new tracks and keeping the old tracks alive.

Many of us have been on the tracks over a period of years and know the pleasure of seeing the first spring flowers, the smell of the bushland after rain, and felt the coolness of the gullies after a hot walk. All these things are constant of our bush. Just sitting around the campfire and enjoying that wonderful sense of comradeship is something one never forgets. We have also witnessed the ravages of the bushfire, very often caused by carelessness which fills us with regret and sadness.

All these things, and many others I have not mentioned, belong to our beloved bush and so we commend them to the new walker knowing he will feel the same.

Beryl McLean

FOUR LITTLE PICTURES

1

Against the sky in fretted line
Etched by the Master Artist's hand,
With stem and leaf and braches fine
The little trees in order stand.

2

From darkening South the evening breeze
With muted voice and bated breath
Tells secrets to the whispering trees,
Like one that brings sad tales of death.

3

The moon has dropt her mantle down
In folds upon the sleeping hills,
And underneath her silken gown
The myriad heart of nature stills.

4

Now Dawn with fingers dipped in light
And rosy face fresh bathed in dew,
Has drawn aside the veil of Night
And calls on Day to wake anew.

A.L.C.

"WHILE THE BILLY BOILS"

So you are on your first bushwalk, and it's time to stop for lunch and boil the billy.

Knowing that it is mandatory under the Act to make a properly constructed fireplace, we roll some stones together to form back and sides, or in the earth bank of the creek dig out a recess with a stick to give us that necessary three sided fireguard. Should all this not be possible, just kick a shallow hole in the ground with the heel of your boot, pile the earth around three sides, and support the cross-bar at each end by means of a simple tripod of sticks tied with heavy string (carried by every walker).

To make our fire, if it has been or is still raining, collect dead wood and bracken fern from the sheltered side of trees or rocks or in shallow caves and above the ground where possible.

Use some of the wood to form a small raft in the fireplace and thus lift the firebed off the cold wet ground; next some bracken, dry leaves or teased-out bark (for really wet conditions a newspaper may be used or a kerosene-soaked rag which has been carried in an empty tin) then small twigs and finally apply the match.

If the weather really is unkind and the "flamin'" thing won't burn, carefully pull out the kindling and try a new approach. Take half a dozen thin sticks, and with your knife (sharp) scrape off any wet bark and commence to cut slivers like the top of a pineapple (cut away from you), but still attached to the wood. Now stand these miniature pine-trees upright in the fireplace together with the drier pieces of bark, paper etc., and finally holding two matches together for extra power, strike and apply the flame.

To prevent calamities such as fingers burnt by hot billy-cans, don't make a bonfire but rather nurse your fire along by placing each piece of wood in pyramid form; this helps the draught and concentrates the flame where it is most needed—on the billy's bottom.

Billy-cans just dumped in the fire by the could-not-care-less type may have a bushcrafty appearance, but to the walker of maturity, who understands the basic principles of heating, a billy-hook is a "must".

Make sure the lid fits loosely and is not jammed by a bent handle or its lug, before placing on the fire; incidentally the efficacy of a green stick in lieu of a lid has no substance in fact.

Keep the inside of your billy polished and the outside black but touch-clean, i.e. none will rub off on the finger. It can be easily demonstrated that the heavy crust of charcoal that is allowed to form by the lazy walker, greatly lengthens the time of boiling.

Now you can sit back and enjoy a cup of the best.

"Mac"

HOW TO WATERPROOF YOUR TENT

Does your tent need waterproofing? If so you can do it yourself and this is what you will need:

1 oz. sugar of lead
1 oz. alum.

Dissolve each separately in about 1 pint of water.

Pour both into a big bucket or similar container and add 4 gallons of water.

Allow the white cloud to settle and pour the clear solution carefully into another container.

Submerge the tent or other article, do not wring out, and hang on line.

Repeat if desired when dry.

Eckart Hill

WHAT WOULD WE DO WITHOUT WATER

The above title would appear somewhat forbidding, and the reader no doubt apprehensively anticipates a long discourse on a scientific subject. Far from it, although I do not claim that there is something scientific in negotiating a six foot water jump without falling in the ditch.

I have just been thinking how prominently water figures in a bushwalker's life. How could we have had that sodden Odyssey to Natural Bridge last year without those large quantities of H₂O? And how could we have been delighted with that never to be forgotten Rooster and Hen Tableau on the same walk if there had not been bucketful of the transparent liquid that makes the lions and tigers so strong?

And even on drier occasions, how could some members have fallen waist deep into the river, or trodden knee deep in a pool without the same drink?

And then, water with or without salt is indispensable for our lunch time swim on summer walks.

The salt variety when in motion offers the widest scope for our photographers, and the spray blown by the wind makes possible the rainbow. Indeed, on the recent Eagle Rock walk the spray aided by the wind was so ubiquitous that walkers could not with certainty decide whether the cold shower they received from time to time was from the heavens or from the sea, or perhaps from the creek as it plunged over the cliff downwards to the sea.

And last of all I think of the unsalted variety of water which is so necessary to make the cup that cheers. The billy-cans of diverse shapes and sizes would be transported in vain if there were not to be found at the lunch spot the precious liquid which would soon be bubbling merrily over the fire, ready to help the walker to enjoy that hour of refreshment, before starting on his homeward trek.

Maurice Clare

CAMPING

There's pleasure in a little house
Among the flowers and trees,
There's gladness in a garden small
With carrots, beans and peas.

There's sheer delight in sawing up
The firewood for the night,
And reading in the cosy room
Beneath the shaded light.

But better is, than all of these,
A lone camp fire and hills,
No other light save light of stars,
No sound but tinkling rills.

Marie B. Byles

MOUNT DROMEDARY

Probably most of you have never heard of this mountain. I have to confess that I did not know about it either before chance took me last Christmas to Bermagui on the far South Coast.

Mt Dromedary towers over the blue Bay of Bermagui and its broad massif is the landmark of the district which you can see from far away when travelling down Princes Highway to the Victorian border. It seems that the mountain derived its name from the curious rock formation near its base in the sea which closely resembles a dromedary.

Day after day the mountain looked into my window and more and more grew my desire to climb up to it. Looking through my fieldglasses I could not see any path, only dense forest, here and there interrupted by white, shiny rocks.

One day, whilst visiting the little cheese factory at Tilba-Tilba, the small village on the foot of the mountain, I was told that once there had been a gold-mine somewhere on the mountain and that until several years ago a hermit had lived there and a track, long since overgrown, had led to his abode-not however from Tilba-Tilba, but from the other side of the mountain. No track, I was assured from Tilba-Tilba.

The mountain continued to plague my mountaineering ambitions and I tried to find a companion for the walk. People at Bermagui declared me raving mad and, as nobody seemed to have any inclination to accompany me and the end of my holidays approached, I decided to go alone.

On a beautiful morning I took the morning bus to Tilba-Tilba, where I arrived at 8:30 a.m. The best ascent seemed clearly to go over the steep meadows, which stretched far up the mountain into the forest, and to follow the broad crest to the summit which was not visible from the valley. Slowly walking up the meadows which became steeper and steeper, climbing several fences and being regarded with curiosity by the grazing cows which had large bells around their necks. At times I could have believed myself to be in Switzerland had it not been for the glittering sea-shores and beaches below.

Very soon, alas, the easy walking over the green slopes was over and the forest began. From far away I had seen that it did not consist of the gumtrees I was used to from my walks around Sydney but of large, straight "Spotted Gums", many of which had unfortunately been burned by bushfires which had raged over the South Coast some years ago. I had thought that it would be easy walking between these trees, but I had counted without the undergrowth of many years which had transformed this forest into a veritable jungle. I had to wriggle myself like a worm through these shrubs and vines and regretted that I had not taken a machete with me. Fortunately the trees were frequently interspersed by rocks and I tried to keep as much as possible to the rock and to climb up on them. This had the other advantage that these parts offered marvellous views. One of the most memorable sights was Lake Wallagal, a large lake which with its many arms and bays caught my eyes again and again. The views over the coastline extended with the height of the mountain, but the virgin forest became still more dense.

Midday had passed when I reached a demolished cairn which must have been the summit. Here I decided to turn back. The peak was nearly completely overgrown. If cleared, it must offer an overwhelming view. In Europe, a path would have been built up to the mountain long ago and a hotel on the top and probably even some kind of mechanical contraption to take you up without walking.

Slowly I fought my way back and in descending I was able to admire the views still more than on the ascent. It was a beautiful feeling to have the mountain all to myself and to see something which surely not many people had seen before me. Finally down at the meadows I rested and, discovering a clear mountain stream in a ravine, took a refreshing bath. A lift took me back in the late afternoon to Bermagui, where few people I think believed that I had really climbed Mount Dromedary.

Dr G.F.J. Bergman

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

When carrying a rucksack, the aim is to try and reduce its weight to a minimum.

It is almost impossible to eliminate any single item of say 1 lb in weight, but it is quite possible to eliminate 1 oz from 16 articles.

Here are a few suggestions.

Leave your plates at home. The billies in which you cook your vegetables and sweets will serve you as well.

All frying pans and grillers have a hole in the end of the handle so that they can be hung up in the kitchen when not in use. Do not disturb them. The forked end of a green stick is just the thing on which to grill a nice juicy steak or chop. Remember, no greasy cooking, no problems in getting utensils clean.

A fork is a luxury on a bushwalking trip. A spoon will perform all the duties of a fork, plus its own duties. In fact, with the addition of a knife, there is no function of eating or preparing food that cannot be carried out. Make sure that it is a tea spoon and nothing larger, for a slow eater is a long liver.

The best thing to stir your food with as it is cooking is a long slender stick, using one end for the salty foods and the other end for the sweets. Make sure to first rub the ends in the grass or in the palm of your hand so as to remove any dirt or loose bark. After the cooking operations are over, this stick can be used to remove your billy from the fire and so save the necessity of having to carry a billy hook.

Later you can plunge one end of it into the fire and when it is glowing use it to light your cigarette and thus save a match.

Now comes the time to wash up, never a pleasant duty, but, with the gear provided by nature to a bushwalker, nothing to be afraid of. With fronds of the bracken fern or sand, and the use of finger nails, even the most stubborn dirt on the billies comes off. So dry these utensils, using a half page of the newspaper you brought with you to read in the train. Alternately, one may leave them near the fire to dry. Simple? Nothing to buy, nothing to wear out, no damp rags to pack when moving off and no weight to carry. Similarly, the same newspaper can be used to dry oneself after a wash. Remember, all modern washrooms now have paper towels provided.

Do not worry about expensive rain or bathing hats. When needed, your water bag, inverted, is the perfect answer. If it will stop water from getting out when full, then it will certainly stop water from getting in when empty.

Your boots were not only made to walk in. With the cover of your sleeping bag laid over the top of them they make an excellent pillow.

If you are musical, you can still produce melodies from common objects found in your pocket. A comb, plus one of the little pieces of tissue-like paper you are very likely to be carrying with you, is one example. Everyone knows how to play this instrument.

This does not exhaust all the known ideas, but is sufficient to serve as an introduction. No doubt many of our bright walkers will be able to think of new ones and try them out during the present season.

Wally McGrath

A FAIRY TALE

Once upon a time there lived a young and handsome bushwalker whose name was Harry Trueblood, only he didn't call himself a bushwalker because nobody had ever heard of bushwalking in those days. Harry used to spend all his spare time walking, and people in the village thought that he was mad and would tap their heads significantly when he went by. Even his mother regretted that she had given birth to such an unnatural child.

Every weekend, Harry would go off on his own, taking with him seven pounds of rice, and as he walked he laid a trail of rice behind him. He had to do this so that he could find his way home again, because compasses and maps hadn't been invented yet.

One weekend disaster struck poor Harry. When he turned round to retrace his steps, having used up all his rice, he saw a wombat licking its lips. The greedy creature had followed Harry and eaten up every grain of his precious trail.

The situation seemed desperate. Search and Rescue hadn't yet been formed. "I am undone", cried Harry, loosening his belt, for he'd just eaten a big meal of fresh vegetables. Dried vegetables hadn't been invented either. And there in this dreadful situation we shall have to leave our hero for a moment.

Back in the village where Harry lived there was a beautiful maiden called Rosamund Smith. Rosamund was in love with Harry, but Harry, the silly ass, just ignored her. He was too interested in bushwalking to pay any attention to her and he never took her to dances because bushwalkers, of course, can't dance.

This weekend Rosamund was feeling a bit fed up. She couldn't go to the pictures because there weren't any in those days, not even silent ones, so when she saw Harry set out she decided to follow him. But Rosamund was wiser than Harry because she took tapioca with her instead of rice, and everybody knows that wombats don't like tapioca. When she saw the wombat eating the rice she just followed quietly behind leaving her trail of tapioca.

When Harry saw Rosamund coming towards him he was so delighted that he had a temporary fit of madness and proposed to her on the spot, and so they got married and raised a large family of bushwalkers - and that's how the Bush Club started.

Peter Bedford

LIKE ALICE IN WONDERLAND

It was at the beginning of my Australian bushwalking career that Paddy Pallin played this trick on Eckart and me.

Paddy was leading a walk for our club somewhere along the Lane Cove River. I loved the bush but I had not been here long enough to recognize landmarks or to judge the distance from civilization. In the afternoon the other members of the party split up and headed for their North Shore homes. Paddy, Eckart and I scrambled up-hill through the undergrowth, enjoying the bush flowers all around us. We reached a high wooden fence and walked along it until we came to a hole about 18 ins. high. Without more ado Paddy took off his pack and crawled through it, telling us to follow him. It was not so easy for the hole was neither very high nor very wide, and although I freely admit that Eckart is a better bushwalker than I am, you have to believe me that I made a better job of creeping through that bit of open space than our giant friend did. In fact I was quite proud I had managed it so well. I quickly collected myself and my rucksack and, shaking off the dead leaves and the dirt, had a look around. I felt like Alice in Wonderland. The scenery had changed completely. No gum trees, no rocks, no bush flowers. A garden path hemmed in a lawn and flower beds. "What is this?" I exclaimed, "it looks like a beautiful private garden!" "It is", said Paddy calmly, "it is my place - come in and have tea with us".

Ellen Mautner