

April 1957

No. 5

WALKS AND TALKS

The Magazine

Of

THE BUSH CLUB

A little over a year ago an idea, considered almost impossible at first, became a reality with the initial issue of our club magazine.

I have been asked, as president, to write a preface to this fifth edition and take the opportunity to thank the editor for her hard work and enthusiasm, without which WALKS AND TALKS would never have eventuated.

The articles and anecdotes reproduced in this and previous issues record happy times spent on camps and walks. Let us endeavour to keep up this record while the editor is abroad. I'm sure nothing would please her more on her return to find WALKS AND TALKS a sturdy 'child' of ten (issues) or more.

Dorothy Bryant

PRESIDENT

Editor: Janet Stevenson, 45 Mona Vale Road, Pymble.

NOTES from John Griffiths, now in Freemantle, W.A.

Up to the present I have failed to find a walking club in this part of the world. I understand there was one at one stage but it appears that it has been disbanded and if anyone is interested the only outlet is, I think, through Y.H.A. So far have been to Albany, where the coast scenery is pretty good. I passed the Stirling Ranges in the train and they looked very stark in the early morning light. They rise straight up out of level country and reach about 3,800 feet; not high but the effect is good. There is another range nearby them called the Porongorups; there appears to be some sort of track leading through that range but so far have not had the time to worry about such things. I might add that a chap over here who trains one of the top line athletic club's members has put forward the idea that I should take a crowd of runners walking as part of their training. I intend having a yarn with him and get him interested in forming a club for walking etc.

-oOo-

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17th, 1956

Held underground at Assembly Building, Jamison Street, Sydney.

Meeting declared Hopeless by the President on arrival (late again)

Present: All light-hearted idiots and muck-ups.

Apologies: None - everybody meant what they did.

The minutes of the last meeting were not read as the secretary thought it a waste of time and everybody was talking, anyway.

Business Arising:

The Assistant Secretary made a violent protest and explained that he had spent hours drafting the minutes. This confused everybody and was promptly placed to one side to be dealt with later, time permitting.

Correspondence

Incoming: The secretary had only received personal letters and stubbornly refused to read these out.

Outgoing: It was resolved to send a letter of protest to the Presbyterian Church to refrain from hymn singing while the Bush Club was kicking up a row as it was noticed that some members were singing "Roll out the barrel" to the tune of "Jesus Loves Me".

Treasurer's

Report: The Treasurer said there was £34/10/10 Bank Balance but out of that was to be subtracted the money spent on lifesavers for the year, which would leave a credit balance of 10/10.

Special Secretary's

Report: Another live theatre show. Judging by some of the jokes Frank Macken tells he must be part owner of the Tivoli Theatre.

Federation Report: Bushfire Volunteers needed urgently.

Rewards for Service Rendered:

Beryl McLean was presented with the Star, String & Pin for herding the Bush Club members along to different and varied Horror Shows over the past year.

Maurice Clare received the Star, String & Pin for his family's determination to get rid of him every Sunday.

Eric Cadzow, who was absent, was awarded the Start, String & Pin for being a man!

General Business: Albert Fried talked about some character and a gold mine. There was no seconder so the motion failed.

The President wished everybody a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Meeting closed and supper was served.

Gordon Robinson

-oOo-

SOME EXPERIENCES OUTBACK IN SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA

In March 1955 I was staying at Wilmington which was at one time called Beautiful Valley. It is situated on the eastern side of the Flinders Range and is reached by road from Port Augusta.

On a Sunday we all drove out to a sheep station about nine miles away. The old sheep road we went on was 66 yards wide. The countryside was a dusty red and the grass in the paddocks was brown and dry. Here they reckon two sheep to the acre.

The sheep station, owned by Mr Tuppenny, was on the hillside so we left the road in the valley and crossed the cattle grid into the drive and so on to the homestead. Surrounding the house were gum trees and pepper trees, and in the large garden was a mulberry tree and a citrus orchard. Beyond the house was a tennis court, further up a dam and the cowstalls and stables on another side.

Mr Tuppenny and two of his neighbours had recently had a fire track made which enabled them to get more easily to good lookout places. The track had been made by a bulldozer and was only one vehicle wide. It was suggested we would like to see it so the Bedford lorry was weighted down with half a dozen bags of wheat and off we set. The driver and two others were in front and Mr Tuppenny and four of us on the back with two sheep dogs.

We who rode on the back of the lorry often had to duck to avoid branches of trees as we climbed up the hillside. The track was not very obvious and we passed through a number of barbed wire fence gates.

Then, all of a sudden, we met half a dozen kangaroos and the dogs were off on the chase. Two kangaroos got hindered by the wire fencing and Beetle, the black-and-white sheep dog, succeeded in cornering one. Norman, our driver, stopped the lorry, dashed off with his gun and shot the big one which Beetle was fighting; in fact the kangaroo was out to strangle the dog. (The kangaroos were euros, or Central Australian roan wallaroos, and have hair on their coats instead of fur.)

The dead kangaroo was dragged up to the lorry and put on the back and we continued our way to the top of the pass, with Mount Brown on our right. Here we had a wonderful view looking along the Flinders and across to Spencer's Gulf. The striking colours of this extensive countryside, blue of the sea, green of the saltbush in the marshlands and warm rusty red of the hills, were made the more intense by the setting sun.

This was the view in front of us and behind was the Beautiful Valley. The hillside we had climbed up was in shadow and so looked dark, but the valley and opposite hills were lit up.

In the valley there were small patches of intense green, which was corn lucerne, and patches of saltbush and tall gum trees lined the dry creek beds. The silver shining roofs of the odd homestead showed up here and there, and the contrast of dark and bright patches brought about by the setting sun.

After feasting our eyes on all around us we boarded the lorry, sheep dogs and all, and in a low gear slowly descended our very winding track, back to the Tuppenny's homestead.

On a Saturday afternoon in Wilmington the trotting races were held. It was a perfect hot, sunny day and all vehicles left a cloud of dust behind them. A lot of preparation had gone into this occasion, to which everybody came, and the atmosphere was most friendly. Sitting in the stand watching the races and the country landscape, I saw a tall spiral dust whorl which might have been twenty miles away and fifty feet high—the atmosphere was particularly clear.

Before I left I went to my first barbecue. This was organized by the Mothers' and Babies' Club to raise funds, as they have to pay travelling expenses for their nurse to come to them from Port Augusta once a month. The barbecue was held in the dry creek bed at Spring Creek, twelve miles from Wilmington. It was delightful sitting under the gum trees and appreciating the warmth of the fires as it was a windy night, while a member played tunes on the piano accordion.

My farewell to Wilmington was at 6 a.m. one morning when I was driven the 200 miles to Adelaide by the local butcher who was going there on business. The wide empty roads were void of traffic and we arrived in Adelaide by 10 a.m.

Nancy Shaw

CHRISTMAS CHRONICLE

By

Peter Bedford

Illus. By Albert Fried

Last Christmas, five of us, Dorothy, Janet, Albert, Desmond and myself, set out on an 8 day walk along the western border of the A.C.T.

As most members of the Club know only too well, we had been discussing what food to carry on this trip for about the last six months. Albert made out a carefully prepared list for our guidance; suggesting that a calorific deficiency be made up by a loss of body weight of 2½ lbs. This living off the fat of one's body seemed to me to smack of cannibalism. I accordingly took about twice as much food as Albert suggested and Desmond took an even greater quantity. The amount that Dorothy and Janet took shattered any illusion that may have been cherished by male members of the party about dainty feminine appetites.

I took notes during the walk, filling some 50 pages of foolscap with minute writing. Unfortunately when I got to reading the 50 pages I found that 46 of them were quite unprintable, though by far the most interesting portion of the diary. If anyone would like a private peep I shall be pleased to let them have a look, but only the most broadminded and hardened types in the Club should apply. And now to get on with the trip.

Having all been members of the Bush Club for some time, naturally the first thing we did when we got to Canberra was to hail a taxi. This took us up to Franklin Chalet, club house of the Canberra Alpine Club. The only complaint I have to make is regarding the frightening ambiguity of the letters G and L painted in whitewash on two wooden huts outside the Chalet. Do these letters stand for Gents and Ladies or Girls and Lads? You will agree that a mistaken interpretation could have the most unhappy results.

Next day four of us were ready to move off at 8.0 a.m. Desmond was ready at 8.15. Somebody has to be last. The great advantage of having Des in the party is that so long as he is there you can be supremely confident that it won't be you.

Had an easy half day's walk through an Alpine countryside of twisted white snow gums, over ground carpeted with snow grass dotted with little clusters of everlasting flowers and mountain violets. We camped at the foot of Mt Gingera, 6,092 ft, climbing it in the afternoon.

Christmas Eve was a hard un-festive day spent scrambling over the ridges and saddles of the Brindabella Range in the general direction of Mt Bimberi, 6,274 ft. The route was so simple that we couldn't go wrong. All we had to do was to keep to the top of the ridge. After about four hours of rather aimless wanderings, I decided it might be a good idea to have a look at the map. It was remarkable

how this cleared everything up. Towards the end of the afternoon I was looking at the map for about 15 minutes at a time and walking for about 5. It's difficult to say how long this sort of thing would have gone on if Des and Albert hadn't done some highly technical things with a compass and pin-pointed our position.

We decided not to hang up our stockings for Father Christmas that night as they smelt.

On Christmas Day we climbed Mt Bimberi, getting some fine views of snow-topped Mt Kosciusko and Mt Jagungal in the distance. We camped that night at a drover's hut and the girls cooked us a magnificent Christmas dinner.

Menu

Oxtail soup
Tinned ham (removed from tin)
Apple fritters
Fried rice
Christmas pudding
Cream and brandy
Glace fruits
Sweets
Coffee

Not bad for a party of bush-whackers! We decorated the hut with candles and an imitation Christmas tree.

On Boxing Day we had a pleasant walk over the Gurrangarambla Plains to Caves Creek. Saw a group of half-wild horses on the way, grace and beauty in every nervous, restless movement. They appeared to be very interested in us. I'm quite sure that if they had had cameras they'd have taken photographs. Had a swim in a pool in Caves Creek, known as the Blue Water Hole. It was very cold. When we went in the water was blue and we were brown. When we came out the water was brown and we were blue!

We had stewed rabbit for tea that night, caught by Des. Albert cooked a damper. After we had eaten it we noticed that Albert looked very worried. Apparently he had put a threepence in the damper and no one had reported finding it. Fortunately I remembered that I had removed what I thought was a piece of wood from my portion. I'm so used to finding old razor blades, stones, hairpins, bits of fencing wire, false teeth etc. in Albert's dampers that I had thought nothing of it.

Next day we spent exploring caves in the area. Very dark, very eerie. I dreamt that night that I was in one with Marilyn Munroe. Albert woke me up just as my battery failed. I'll never forgive him for that.

The following day was a tough one spent scrambling along the rugged Jackson Range. Camped very late that night. Next day we dropped down to the Goodradigbee River and had a cooking fiesta at night. Albert cooked damper, Janet made some oatmeal cookies and Des cooked

something indefinable. I think that he wanted an excuse to use his stomach pump.

Next day was a lucky one. We were invited into a homestead for tea and Christmas cake. The mother and daughter of the house were at Church, but there was a nice picture on the mantelpiece, presumably of the daughter. Tried to spin out tea and cake as long as possible in hope that she would return, but had to leave without seeing her.

Our second piece of luck that day was getting a lift in a utility for 7 miles along the Brindabella Valley. Again camped that night by the Goodradigbee.

On New Year's Eve we returned to Canberra by taxi. Had a hot bath and put on some clean clothes and the metamorphosis from bushwalkers to tourists was complete. All agreed that we had had a wonderful time. Queer people, bushwalkers!

-oOo-

This year many of our numbers seem to be taking to heart the words of the immortal bard:

Rather see the wonders of the world abroad,
than, living dully sluggardised at home, wear
out thy youth with shapeless idleness.

Shakespeare

-oOo-

FIRES AND HOW TO USE THEM

It seems that the Club is divided upon the rival claims of fireplaces with billy hooks, or fires without anything. The difficulty appears that one or two claim to be authorities on fire building due to their past experience as Cub leaders or organizers to Sunday school boys' clubs etc. I wish to tender this technical article and respectfully point out other useful systems of fires and how to use them.

Chief Scout Lord Baden Powell insisted that the only worthwhile method was to build the fire in a cone shape with sticks and to put the kindling in the centre. However, Mr Le Gay Brereton, a famous backwoods scout of blizzardly cold Canada, said B.P. was a back number and that fires should be built of wood laid criss cross in a square, log cabin fashion, and lit with kindling in the centre.

This chap claimed to have the world record of 21 seconds for fire lighting without matches (yes, without matches) using a bow which twirled or rubbed a stick upon a piece of soft wood. So perhaps he knew something about fires, too.

Anyway, Baden Powell had the last say in the matter, for he insisted that Boy Scouts must be trained and examined for fire

lighting, using HIS method with an allowance of two matches for the test.

My own method is quite good, very dramatic, and depends upon the element of surprise. Having reached the destination one should rest or organise for one's comfort. Then by this time, if a fire is not lighted, one will usually find plenty of good firewood around the fireplace. Then, boldly and suddenly place a large heap of bushes, leaves or other rubbish about two feet high on the fireplace site. This will effectively prevent anyone else dabbling at any fancy system of fire making.

If there are any remonstrances you can point out that the stuff will burn well anyway. Having laid this good foundation for the fire, you may go away, leaving the amateurs to place a few sticks on the heap. When you return you will find the fire burning. If it doesn't burn well, the reason can be usually suggested to be damp materials, or the wind blowing in the wrong direction, or maybe interference with the fire when your back was turned.

If someone had already made a fire, wait till it blazes, and then you can command respect by wisely saying "Only fools light large fires". This is a perfect squelch for dabblers and amateurs.

Now my own system for suspension of billies on a fire is as follows. Carry some pieces of water pipe which can be screwed together to form an eight foot length. This is placed over the fire across a boulder with one end held down by another boulder. The water piping weighs only 15 lbs and can easily be carried by experienced walkers. The pipe can also be used for tent poles, or for piping water from a small trickling spring. When necessary a piece of water pipe can be used by hikers for combat against wolves.

However, one of the best tried and proven systems is that of the three legged iron tripod. These, when issued to the English Army during the Napoleonic wars, were recognised as a great improvement on the old fashioned wrought-iron braziers or basket grates used from the times of the ancient Romans. And if they're good enough for the British army they're good enough for us. The weight is an improvement—being only 11 lbs.

Another useful but slow method is to dig a large trench, but a strong back and a spade are necessary for this. A good idea is the placing of two large logs together sideways. This requires an axe and two large logs as well as a hell of a lot of energy.

Then there are lots of other good ideas using primus stoves, metho lamps, canned heat, thermit, or boiling mud and hot springs (limited to New Zealand thermal regions).

Now an excellent method of cooking is to heat stones red hot in the fire and drop them in the billy of water, or canvas water bucket. The hot stones can later be used for footwarmers in the sleeping bag.

This now brings us to the use of billy hooks—but space has run out and this article will have to be continued in the next issue.

[Not if I have any say - Ed.]

Frank Macken

-oOo-

SUPPERTIME IS DAMPER TIME

Everybody is stretching himself comfortably while the toes are sizzling at the campfire.

But alas! a woman's work is never done, and who would not want to be a woman for once and bake a delicious damper?

There are dampers and dampers! The true bushman variety is prepared by throwing a blob of dough into the hot ashes. When offering the ash coloured result around, the question is risked whether flour too had been used in the process.

Another variety requires a billy can, for preference one of those awful looking shiny new ones which are badly in need of the dirty black professional look.

When the campfire has burnt down to a soft cherry red glow of embers, then your time has come.

You do not want the result of your labour to be eaten out of the billy with a spoon while the black crust has to be removed with hammer and chisel. So you grease the inside of the billy. Anything from bacon fat, dripping, butter to ricinus oil may be used. Now you mix the dough: half a pound of flour (of the self raising variety!) will do for the small bushwalker's billy. Water and a pinch of salt are stirred in thoroughly until no thirsty white islands of dry flour remain. The consistency should be that of a clayey track on a wet day. Then the whole gluey mess is tipped into the billy. A depression is formed in the embers in which to stand the billy safely. Then hot embers are heaped up all around it, the higher the better. With the help of two sticks a large red hot coal is placed on top of the billy and always replaced when cooling out. This procedure, which helps to simulate the even temperature of an oven, requires great self restraint; no swearing is permitted when the piece rolls off the billy lid nine times until it finally chooses to stay put. And now comes the most exciting act of your adventure. While you are nervously pacing around the campfire like the expectant father outside the surgery, your baby is being born. That will take 15 to 25 minutes according to the heat of the ashes, the air temperature and the colour of your hair should you have any left. You proudly lift the billy out of the ashes, blow the dust off the top and lift the lid. If you don't want treatment for third degree burns on your fingers you had best lever it up with the blade of your knife. And isn't it beautiful! Baked a golden brown like the body of a Bondi bathing belle. But the beauty may only be skin deep! So you have to test the real character by sinking in a sliver which you prepared by removing the bark from a thin twig. If it comes out covered in soft white cream, then you have to shove the billy back again into the embers and give it another 10 to 20 minutes, for it has cooled during

the test. But finally it is done and isn't it delicious with butter and the obligatory cuppa?

If you feel the blood of the artist running through your veins then, on an evening when the faces of your companions are already showing the drawn appearance of starvation after a few days walking and camping, your great moment has come. You will treat them to a super colossal fruit cake! Egg powder and cocoa, chopped nuts, chopped dates and raisins, sugar, honey or saccharine tablets—they all have to go into your work of art. And, if you are the extravagant type, a threepenny bit may go in too. After your guests have all indulged in the feast without noticing your little gift, you ask them about it and the expression on their faces will be ample reward for your generosity.

A. Fried

-oOo-

WALK REPORT, LAKE ST CLAIR WEEKEND

1994. We left Sydney in sweltering heat on the 8.15 a.m. jet plane to Hobart and reached Cynthia Bay by helobus at 11.00 a.m.

The weather was good as this was the Reserve's Annual Fine Weekend. Along the Lake's foreshores we were entertained with stories of steady rain, boggy tracks and thirsty leeches, of summer snowfalls and icy creek crossings, and the climbs abandoned due to thick mists.

It was a long mild day; a gentle sun lit snowy crags rising from a shimmering lake and filled mossy beech-myrtle forests with soft green light. The sky gleamed with the colours of gradually fading day as we gathered around the fire at Pine Valley Hut to hear old tales of Indian Wal, slow train journeys and difficult descents around cliff lines. Then into a soft straw bed we rolled, and it was morning.

Now came the easy part of the weekend, the climb. Our weight was neutralized. We darted across button grass marshes, skipped from foothold to foothold on precipices and hopped like mountain wallabies up folds of blooming, stunted, snowfreed brushwood. The packs were our ballast. A large wombat lumbered away and screeching jackdaws fled in terror, whilst an odd composition, remnant of a long past age, was building its home, sheltered under a bank in a brook. From the summit we saw the prison bars of a bygone grim convict settlement, a gently hued maze of roughly sculptured mountains, inhospitable button grass uplands, jungly forested valleys and smooth waters.

..... On the track to the helobus stop we rested by a roaring river eating our food containers and drinking self heating powdered tea. As the bus rose aloft we observed the Roaring Forties preparing for the onslaught of the morrow.

Alan Sugerman