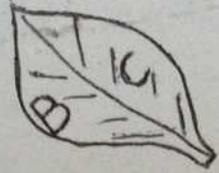
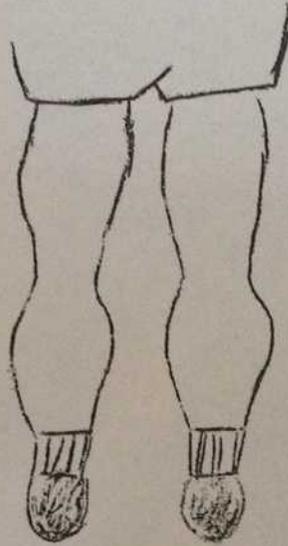
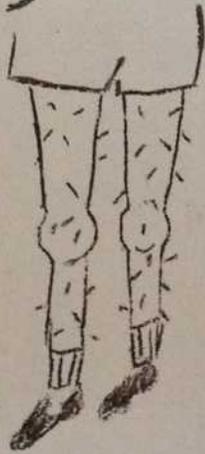
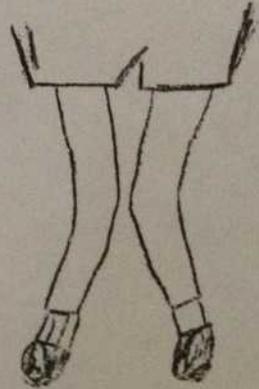


ISSUE No 7.

WALKS



AND



TALKS

N.S.

October, 1957. 1/-

WALKS AND TALKS.

The Magazine

of

T H E B U S H C L U B

Thanks go to all members of the Club in Office during the last twelve months for a really good job. Welcome back to Office those who have been re-elected and welcome to new members of Office.

As new Social Secretary, I would like to say, if anyone at all has some ideas for any special theatre party, skits at the Bush Club's Annual functions (such as Christmas Party), etc. they would be most welcome.

As Editor of Walks and Talks, I wish to say thank you for your contributions to your magazine which enables me to keep it going as best I can until Janet's return. Please keep them coming.

To those of you who would like to write to Peter Bedford, his address is: 113 Fellows Road, Swiss Cottage, London, N.W.3. England.

Helene.

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EDITOR: Miss Helene Economos, 55 Watkins Street, Newtown.

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## BUSHWALKING IN INDIA.

By Walter McGrath

Arriving in India too early to start climbing in the Himalayas, I decided to join in with two members of the Yorkshire Himalayan Expedition whom I met on the ship and go for a walking tour of ten to fourteen days duration. The route we chose would lead us through remote villages in the Himalayan foothills in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The culmination of the walk would be the ascent of a 12,000 feet snow covered peak named "Chaur" situated on a spur off the main Himalayan range.

When all our food, camping gear and climbing equipment was assembled, its weight looked terrific. I suggested we engage a coolie, but my two friends said they could not afford such a luxury. They compromised by stating that as they were younger than I, they would carry the greater part of the load. In the end my pack weighed 45 lbs and theirs 70 lbs each.

We left our headquarters, the Punjab Boy Scouts camping grounds at Tara Devi one morning and caught a bus to Simla, a popular hill station of 70,000 people at an altitude of 7,500 feet. Here we caught another bus to a small village named Fagu, twelve miles distant along the Hindustani-Tibetan road. For our trip this village was the end of the road. All transport beyond here is by mule trains. These animals have small bells around their necks, which give out a pleasant musical sound as they walk along. We came to another small village called Cheog after having walked for about an hour. It started to rain here, so we took shelter under the entrance of a shop. We had two cups of tea at this shop and met the local schoolteacher, who could speak English. He told us that no white man had been along this route since 1947, the year the British left India. He showed us a suitable camping ground in the forest adjoining the village. All the men and boys of the town came along and watched while we made camp. When we went in search of firewood, they all joined in and eventually we had sufficient for our needs. The schoolteacher told everyone to go when we started

eating and they all disappeared as quickly as they had come.

Here - and as we were to find right throughout India - timber for firewood is very scarce whilst timber for tent poles is non-existent. The reason is, with such a large population and the people living so primitively, all timber is picked up as soon as it falls to the ground. Even in the forests, very little is seen. There is just enough to cook a meal with none for a camp fire. The matter of drinking water is also a problem. One dare not drink water from streams or rivers without first boiling it or adding chlorine tablets, dur to the risk of cholera.

From this village we left the forest area and descended to the Geeri River - about 2,000 feet lower. We made camp at another small village named after the river. As we were out of the forest area, no wood existed at all. The local villagers saw our plight and gave us some of their precious timber, both for cooking with and to erect our tent.

We were on the track again early next morning steadily climbing as we were ascending the river. People were continually on the move along these tracks for one is never out of sight of human habitation anywhere in India. In these mountain regions, most people carry umbrellas. When not in use these usually hang down their backs with the handle hooked into their collar. This was a hard days march and we did not reach the next village, Pulbah, until after dark. We stayed at a Forest House.

It was here we had our first experience of cooking Indian style. The stove is made of mud and is at floor level. One has to sit or squat on the floor to cook. Under the circumstances, this is the best position as the room soon fills with thick acrid smoke because there is no chimney provided. Near ground level is the only place where one can remain in the room without getting one's eyes full of smoke.

My two companions were now starting to feel the effects of their

heavy loads. As the next stage necessitated the crossing of a 8,000 feet pass, we decided to engage a Coolie to do some of our carrying. We made up a load of 80 lbs for him and off we started early in the morning. About lunch time it started to rain. Our coolie had it over us - up went his umbrella to protect both himself and our pack. As we got higher the rain turned into snow. We were still in our shorts and were very cold. About 4 pm we arrived at another Forest Rest Hut outside a small village named Sahrin. We were in the forest again. All around us were giant cedar Deodoms trees. The next day was sunny, so we rested and dried our wet clothes. During the afternoon we practised some rock climbing and then packed our day packs for the assault on "Chaur" the following day.

We were up before daybreak and left at 6.30 a.m. from the 8,000 feet level, the ground was now covered. At about 10,000 feet, the last of the trees petered out. From there on, there was nothing but snow. We reached the summit, 12,000 feet at 2.30 pm and had a beautiful view of the main Himalayan range about twenty miles to the north. Near the top we saw the roof of a Hindu Temple protruding through the snow. During summer, after the snow has melted, Hindus come up to this Temple. It is the leading pilgrim centre of this area.

We arrived back at the Forest Rest hut at 6.30 pm, tired but pleased with our efforts.

The next day, we rested again at this pleasant Rest Hut, then returned by the same route we had come. Our experiences on the return trip is another story.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BUSH CLUB.

By Helene Economos.

The Annual General Meeting of the Bush Club was held in the Lower Assembly Hall, Jamieson Street, Sydney at 4.30 pm on Saturday, the 10th August, 1957.

Elected into Office for the ensuing twelve months were the following

President: Mrs. Dorothy Bryant.

Vice Presidents: Mr. Gordon Robinson.  
Mr. Walter McGrath.

Secretary: Miss Ellen Mautner.

Assistant Secretary: Miss Natalie Lampmoon.

Treasurer: Mr. Alan Sugarman.

Social Secretary: Miss Helene Economos.

Committee Member: Mr. Paul Rann.

Elected as Delegates for the Federation of N.S.W. Bushwalkers were the following:

Delegates: Miss Helene Economos.  
Mr. Paul Rann

Proxy Delegates: Miss Rhona McBurney.  
Mr. Ian Johnston.

The Secretary informed the Meeting there are sixty six (66) members in the Club, nearly an equal number of men and women.

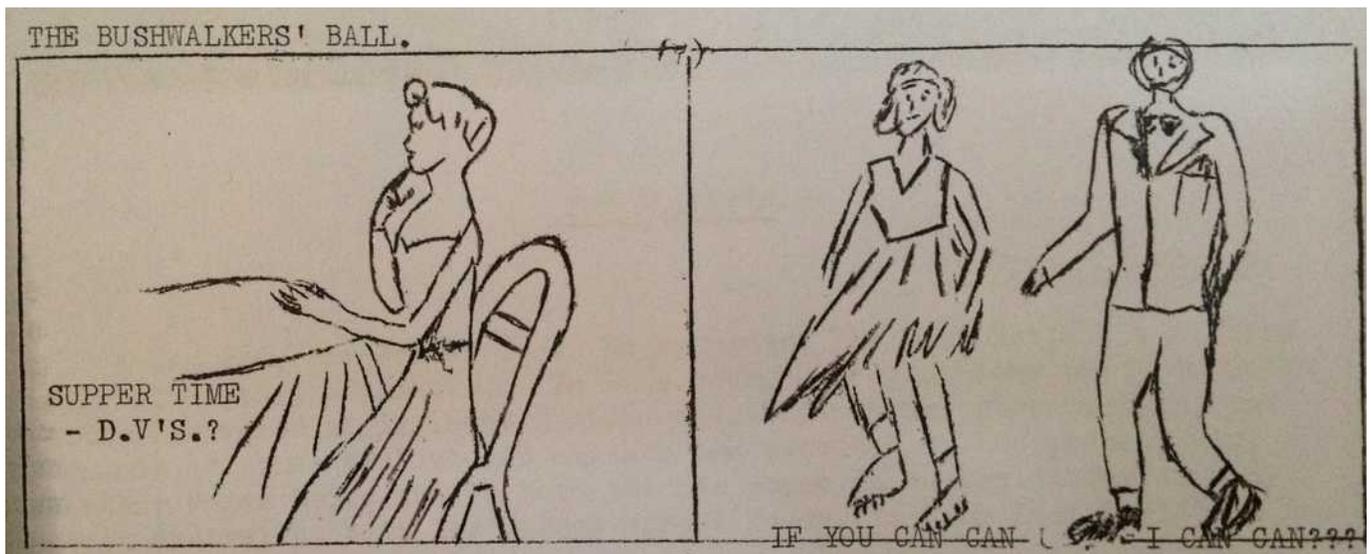
After all business of the meeting was completed, films were shown until 9.15. pm. After which we had supper and all left at 10 pm.

The films were shown and supplied by Mr. Alan Catford. Some depicted part of his trip to Tasmania whilst others were of ski-ing and bob-sledding. They were all very interesting.

Supper was provided by one and all. There was an abundance of food, so much so that members were requested to take some home.

So ended the Annual Bush Club meeting and a very enjoyable Saturday night.

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## THE PLATYPUS.

By Gordon Robinson.

Years ago, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote "The Lost World", a fantasy of natural history adventure. In this book, an exploratory party in South America discovered an isolated plateau where dinosaurs, pterodactyls, and all manner of other prehistoric animals had survived to the present day. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle should have set his scene in Australia for in many respects Australia, with its unique mammal fauna, is "The Lost World" in reality.

Mammals:- Furred animals which feed their young on milk, were evolved from reptile like ancestors away back at the beginning of time. For years, zoologists dreamed of the "missing link" which would show the relationship between the cold blooded, egg laying reptiles and warm blooded baby bearing mammals.

In November, 1797, settlers in the new colony which was to become Sydney, discovered in the backwater of the Hawkesbury River "An amphibious animal of the Mole kind", which we know as the Platypus.

Specimens were sent to Sir Joseph Banks in England: one was passed on to Dr. George Shaw of the British Museum; and the other came into the hands of the German anatomist Blumenbach.

After many misgivings and because the thing looked fantastic enough to lead him to suspect a hoax, Shaw described it under the name of *Platypus anatinus* ("flat footed animal like a duck")

Blumenbach, unaware of Shaw's work, named it *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus* (birds beak animal, a paradox). By the rules of zoological names, Shaw's name should stand, having been published first. However, unfortunately, six years earlier the name *Platypus* had been given to a

genus of wood boring beetles so it could not be retained for another member of the animal kingdom.

To-day the correct title of the creature is Ornithorhynchus anatinus which means "birds beak animal, like a duck". This creature turned out to be the "missing link" the scientists were seeking.

It is warm blooded, but the temperature is neither as high nor as constant as is in the higher mammals. The body temperature of a healthy Platypus may vary from 82 degrees Fahrenheit. Most mammals have a body temperature of 98.5 Fahrenheit, with not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  degree variation in good health.

The most remarkable feature is the Platypus lays eggs similar to lizards' eggs - round and about half an inch in diameter, with soft parchment like shells. Sometime one, but usually two eggs are laid at a time. They are hatched in an underground nesting chamber. For the first week or so the babies are fed with milk which they lick from the pores on a special patch of skin on the mother's abdomen.

The fully grown male platypus is about twenty inches long and the female slightly smaller. More than a third of its length is taken up by the tail, which is broad and somewhat flattened, like a beaver's. The body is covered with beautifully soft fur, brown on the back, silvery below. However, on the tail, the fur is replaced by coarse hair, almost like pig bristles, darker brown than the rest of the body. The difference is so striking it makes one suspect that perhaps the tail and the body come from different animals.

The Platypus has four short legs which end in webbed feet, each with five claws, more like the feet of a goanna lizard than those of any other known mammal. The body is so stout and the legs so short,

that the body is dragged along the ground when the mammal walks - another reptile like feature. The webbing helps the creature to swim, the front feet being provided with fleshy flaps ( rather like the familiar rubber "frog-man" paddles) as a further aid to swimming. These can be folded back when the little creature wishes to use its claws.

On the hind ankles of the male, are a pair of sharp spurs, distinct from the claws, connected by ducts with poison glands - the only known occurrence of venom in the whole mammal order. The venom glands are most active in the breeding season, when the male requires to protect his female and babies. The female does not possess poison spurs. It is essential the male should have some such means of defence against attack, for he has no teeth with which to fight.

The mouth is a broadly flattened beak supported by internal plates, upper and lower, covered with a soft rubbery naked and very sensitive skin. Earlier observers might be excused for believing the beak was bird like in spite of its softness. It looks very like the bill of a duck but much broader in proportion to its length.

The eyes are small, beady, and dark brown. The ears are represented only by a pair of holes just behind the eyes. There are no external earflaps or trumpets but the holes are guarded by a pair of muscular rims like eye lids. Indeed, they might reasonably be called "earlids". These enable the creature to close its ears as well as its eyes whilst underwater.

Platypuses in nature spend most of the day under cover in a complicated series of burrows opening at the water's edge by some placid sheltered pool in a running stream. The entrance has a

constriction through which the platypus can squeeze only with some difficulty. This is deliberate and an important part of the burrow. Its function is that of an ordinary laundry wringer, to squeeze as much water as possible from the fur before the platypus enters its dry nest. It is remarkably efficient in this respect.

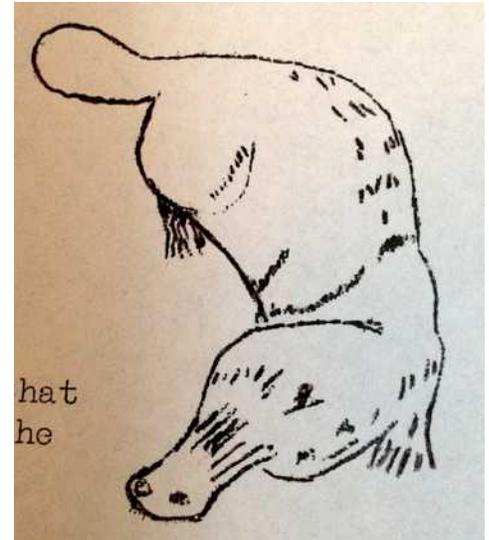
Inside the burrows branch and lead to living rooms and a cosy annexe right inside which is the nursery. Here, at the right time, the female makes a nest of leaves and dry grass, and after feeding well and fully, retires to lay her eggs, hatch and brood her young. She remains "out of circulation", with the nursery entrance plugged up with mud, for some weeks until the babies are ready to be weaned and come out with the parents for a first swim.

The feeding habits of the platypus are crepuscular - that is to say, they are usually most active in the twilight of the evening and morning.

They swim gracefully and expertly. With the sensitive beak membrane they seek out worms and other small creatures, shovelling up, it is believed, "Nutrient mud" rich in organic material, from the bed of the stream.

In captivity, earthworms form the major item of their diet, and each platypus will eat more than half its body weight of earthworms each night. Provision of earthworms at this rate imposes one of the greatest problems in keeping platypus healthy in captivity.

Platypuses are, of course, rigidly protected by law. It is an offence to kill, capture or interfere with them in any way, or to possess any fur or other portion of a platypus. Under such rigid protection the species, once threatened with extinction, have made



considerable progress.

Eastern Australia is the only place in the world where the platypus is found. The range extends from Queensland to Tasmania.

(Material in this article was collected from various Naturecraft books - Ed)

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### THE TRADITION OF REOLUTE

By Frank Macken.

From the beginning of the hillside camping at Resolute as outlined by Beryl, we have now almost arrived at a traditional Bush Club love of Christmas and New Year at the Resolute Bay camp.

The trickling spring flowing through the rocks and pools of the "kitchen" where we all cook and eat, as well as relaxing by the campfire at night, have a charm that none of our other camps can match.

The rugged hillsides and the view of Pittwater and Barrenjoey, seen from above our own Resolute swimming beach, give that certain "something" to the place. Here there are pleasant walks to the Commodore Heights and national Fitness Camp, and further on to Flint and Steel Bay. For variety, we can walk in the opposite direction (where there is a small store, and drinks!)

Night time is a pleasant time when we can sit together among the rocks on the hill above the beach, waiting for the full moon to rise above the horizon, whilst we chatter and sing the usual songs of the open spaces and camp life. When the sun shines, Resolute Beach is a secluded spot for all of us to laze, sunbake and swim.

Our "kitchen" becomes slippery at times with damp leaves from the trees above and quite a few of us have taken a slither along the rock floor. The domesticated ones can then take turns with a tree branch to sweep the rock floor clean of leaves.

We have had wet holidays there too. However, by keeping roaring fires going in the Fishermen's hut we can have some comfort, dryness and hot food as well. At times, we can buy fish when the fishermen net a catch and haul it to the beach. Civilisation and noise now threaten the fish life at Resolute, and we may not have the fishermen again.

They used to watch all day from above for fish, and sharks too while we swam at the beach. There was always plenty of noise and laughter when the children from the Fitness Camp a mile away came to Resolute for their daily swim in the afternoons. However, the children's camp was not always in progress when we were camped there.

New Year is party night. This means we all have fun and games in the Fishermen's hut by candle light (bring your own firewood). Games of Housie/Housie, a treasure hunt, funny stories, and other attempts at fun, keep us moving towards midnight. Then the traditional coffee, cakes and savouries are served with a drop of something to toast the Queen. Then we have dancing the Hokey Pokey; Oranges and Lemons, etc. on the sandy beach to celebrate the incoming New Year. Once we had so much fun none of us could go to bed before 4 am that morning.

There have been many campers there in good years and there have been holidays when few campers come. Sometimes the camps have been unbroken from Christmas to the New Year, but most of us have to work between these periods and the camp is closed for a few days.

You, too, must come along for a few days next Christmas or New Year which is only two and a half months away. It is so easy to get there - just a hop, step and jump from Palm Beach. All are welcome and such good fun and times can be had. The life of a beachcomber for just a few days is so relaxing and enjoyable after a year's toil in the office, in the outdoors, or wherever one earns one's living.

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A HOLIDAY AT LORD HOWE.

By Metta Rother.

Lord Howe Island, a picturesque spot four hundred and thirty six miles north east of Sydney, is reached by Flying Boat in three and a half hours from Rose Bay Air Base.

In the two and a half weeks of my stay on Lord Howe I saw all the place had to offer to the tourist. The island is seven miles long and approximately one mile wide at the narrowest point. It was discovered in 1788 by the commander of H.M.S "Supply" while on his way to form a settlement at Norfolk Island. It was named in honour of Lord Howe, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies in the British Cabinet.

A coral reef forms a large lagoon on the western side of the

island. We viewed the corals through the glass bottom of the rowing boat and found a number of bright formations, also a quite rare black coral - the Organ Pipe. The lagoon itself provides for excellent swimming in which I indulged a great deal. Aqua-planing is also done quite a bit, this being a simplified type of ski-ing.

Two mountains rise nearly 3,000 feet sheer from the sea at the southern tip of the island. They dominate the island and affect the local weather. Under the guidance of an islander we climbed up 1,000 feet to a point called "Goat House" from where we enjoyed the most magnificent view, not only of the whole island but also of the "Pyramid", a sheer rock rising out of the sea. Bathed in sunlight it appeared a pale pink. It is situated approximately thirteen miles away. On a launch trip undertaken a few days later we viewed the mountains and also the Pyramid Rock from the sea.

The eastern side of the island consists of beaches where fine surfing can be enjoyed. A numerous variety of shells can be found all around. The northern side is hilly, the same as the whole inner area of the island. The highest point there rises to six hundred feet, which I climbed one fine sunny day, enjoying quite a different, not less interesting view.

The two hundred islanders live in tidy places scattered over the west and centre. In the early days, they lived by exporting palm seeds for commercial use to all parts of the world. Now they depend nearly entirely on the tourist trade for their living. They run about six boarding houses and three general stores.

I hope to have given you a true picture of this lovely holiday spot tucked away in the Pacific Ocean and now so easily reached from Sydney.

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