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WALKS AND TALKS



THE MAGAZINE OF THE
BUSH CLUB

June is the month when business houses take stock: balance sheets are prepared, and the profit and losses assessed. For some it will be a good year; enterprise and industry has produced results, but the timid, the cautious and those who are always waiting for something to turn up, will not please their shareholders.

The Bush Club, as a very minute partner in the world-wide company of 'Nature Unlimited', looks back over the past twelve months to assess its contribution to the Conservation Balance Sheet.

Besides our subscriptions to and support of the Wild Life Preservation Society and the National Parks Association of New South Wales, we can record a track-clearing group who spent a week-end tidying the tracks along the Wattamolla coastline; another around the Rylstone region (the leader's report on this exploration is included in this issue of WALKS & TALKS); and the recent work by members at the Muogamarra Sanctuary which was badly burnt out in the summer fires.

Perhaps these small efforts may not assist very much in 'balancing the budget' (it would need almost a miracle to do that), but at least they show that we are not altogether just sitting on the fence.

Dorothy Bryant
Co-Editor.

OUR COVER

Our cover this month is the work of Judy Ellis, who has supplied the following information about the butterflies.

These butterflies are the Peacock Moths from Chile. In South America, as in other regions, the family of Emperor Moths is represented in the actual tropical zone by a host of different species. Their number rapidly decreases as one travels north or south and they generally become smaller, their colours and markings becoming simpler and less varied. An exception to this rule among the Emperor Moths is the Polythysana, a genus which is found only in Chile, and there largely only on the other side of the Tropic of Capricorn.

The males of the genus Polythysana are active during the day, flying around the tree tops when the sun is at its highest, searching for the females which fly only at night.

The butterfly at the bottom of the branch on the cover is the female of the species Polythysana andromeda, and is of different shades of brown. The other butterfly is the male and belongs to the species Polythysana rubrescens.

These are the haunts we love,
Glad with enchanted hours,
Bright as the heavens above,
Fresh as the wild bush flowers.

(from "The Bush" by James Lister Cuthbertson)

FEDERATION RE-UNION 1965 STYLE

Frank Macken

There were over 200 bushwalkers attending the 1965 Re-union, and we of the Bush Club swelled our numbers by 5m, 4f, to 12 by the inclusion of three children, Susan, Jean and Chris.

The setting was the ideal location of Bluegum Forest, Blackheath. We were met by Rob, who had explored the road walk but finished up hitching a ride. The Grose River was still clear and running in spite of the record drought, and the weather was fine and mild. Sam called in to see us in the early evening to introduce his daughter, Dale.

The large Re-union Camp-fire commenced early (we missed Paddy) and soon Jean and Susan gave us a duet which was happily received and encored. Then followed a sketch by Alice, Jean and Frank, also well received by the somewhat restive and 'spirited' audience.

Besides desultory singing of camp-fire songs, some well known and some not so well known, there were many other items during the concert. We often sang quite out of step with the other half, who may have been out of phase with us, but there were so many people around the fire that it was difficult to co-ordinate the singing. There were songs with guitars, and a group of singing actors representing the folk tale of 'Waltzing Matilda', complete with ghost in cellophane, quite luminous in the torchlight - that part was realistic, that is, if ghosts can be realistic!

We had a performer who told anecdotes you know, short funny 'tails'. There was one about three Scotchmen with dermatitis, which I'll have to tell you some other time - it was quite clean.

A large group presented a satire on Ball's Pyramid (Lord Howe Island) adventure, in four acts. The dialogue and construction showed clever thought by the University Club. The presentation and chorus were good, very zealous and vital - something about three sirens on top of Ball's Pyramid waiting for men (quite an unusual theme!) It was very entertaining, except that at times we missed some of the dialogue. We had two comperes, but next time a loud hailer may be an advantage, much as we may deplore such mechanisation.

Near the end of the show found Phil on the boards manfully entertaining the now hungry people with his ukulele and folk songs. I thought this was a very good effort, trying to dam the tide. But the tide soon spilled over in the rush to hot cocoa and mutton sandwich hot from the barbecue pit where two spitted sheep had been roasting all night.

And so the Bush Club, though outnumbered by some other clubs, made its contribution to the entertainment of the evening. We all seemed to enjoy the show and most of the older hands expressed the view that it was better than some they'd had. Still, I always feel that Re-unions are good.

Most of us came back next day by Govett's Leap, except for Alan and family who returned to their car at Perry's Lookdown. The day was fine and mild and the wonder of it all was the clear water still running down Govett's Creek and the cool ferns and moss along the rocks to the Falls. We had lunch at the foot of the Leap, and even there there was enough water to make a display. Then up and up, and up again, with Susan often taking the lead from Howard, who was busy keeping us on the move, to the bus to Blackheath at the top, with icecreams, milk shakes etc., and finally to the silver train home. A very pleasant weekend in every way.

REPORT (ABRIDGED) ON A CROWN LAND AREA

County: Phillip
 Parishes: Coolcalwin, Nullo, Growee, Rumker
 Shire: Rylstone
 Approximate Area: 75,000 acres, of which approx. 45,000 acres is
 Crown Land
 Exploration Party: From the Bush Club led by Alan Catford, over the
 Easter vacation, 1965.

The area examined was part of a roughly equilateral triangle formed by the Rylstone-Bylong road in the west, the Nullo Mountain road in the south, and Benjang (or Lee) Creek in the east. Benjang Creek attracted attention because it appeared on the map both to rise and flow through mostly unsettled land in its up-stream half. The country enclosed by the above boundaries contains much, but well less than half, private land, but there are large continuous areas of crown land. The two roads were useful in allowing two well-separated penetrations to be made in the short time available.

Camp was made on Good Friday afternoon at the foot of the Bulga, a sandstone knoll roughly 500 feet high, on the left of the road about 12 miles from the turn-off to Nullo Mountain. The Bulga is a prominent landmark forming part of the edge of the sandstone plateau, which is very fragmentary here near its western limits. The locals call this the Bluff, but actually the feature on the map called the Bluff is about a mile further on. We did not realize until Monday that we were illegally camped, thinking that we were on the camper's access lot R3816, which is on the map at the foot of the Bluff. Our campsite at the foot of the Bulga was a very beautiful one, backed by tall white gums and with Cox's Creek meandering through a swamp just in front of us, providing water which, although it needed boiling before consumption, served for washing. Under the droughty circumstances it was not bad, but the presence of cattle necessitated caution. (We brought about 12 gallons of drinking water with us).

On Friday afternoon we climbed the Bulga by what appeared to be the only walking route up - on the eastern side. From there we enjoyed a good view of the country into which we were to venture on the following days.

On Saturday we left camp at 8 a.m. and travelled by cars further along the road, turning off on to a private road east of the Bulga. When this road forked about a mile further on, we followed on the right hand fork for about another mile, then continued on foot. We were following directions received from Mr. Mills, a prominent landowner around here, as to how best to reach Benjang Creek. The track continued. As a recently bulldozed fire-trail, through fine open forest country, level and growing mainly "yellow scribbles", grey gum and stringybark. Rocky highlands converged from the south and west, the latter showing some interesting sculpture, and formed a defile which we approached down a slope. Through here flowed a very nice little creek with good water between banks of ferns in a damp scrubby environment. From a tall rock tower growing out of the valley floor (a typical spur residual of these parts) we had a splendid view of the way ahead. Immediately north of our east-west valley towered Mt. Pomany on the Great Divide, a massive sandstone block approximately 900 feet high from the valley floor. The whole area was heavily forested and very lumpy, with rocky spurs coming down from the northern side.

The trail continued easterly, and after a couple of rounded rises, which were probably, the Divide, turned more southerly. At the foot of the second rise we came to the first of two paddocks known as Heffron's Hole, and belonging to the aforesaid Mr. Mills. The first one was small, situated quite romantically between towering rock walls - an ideal cattle duffer's hideout, which indeed it was. There were slip-rails and a creek, which would hold water in better times. About a mile further along the fire-trail we came to the second Heffron's Hole, a much larger paddock and very open. This one was carrying some of Mr. Mills' cattle.

The fire-trail turned north here, but we left it and continued east, crossing two ranges of hills, the first by a narrow gully where we saw an unusual hawk. Benjang Creek when we came to it we found to be moderately deeply entrenched, with good clean water, but a half-mile walk downstream on the flat, sandy, pebbly bed showed that the water alternately surfaces and disappears underground. The pebbles were mostly sandstone, made interesting by colour and pattern, with some basalt washed down from Nullo Mountain, on the slopes of which the creek has its source. There was evidence of good height of water carried by this creek, including a jam of logs and sticks a good 15' high. A walk down the entire unspoiled part of this creek (about 17 miles, roughly) should not be too difficult, judging by what we saw.

The sandstone bluffs just east of the second Hole offer fine vantage points for surveying the surrounding country, particularly the Mt. Pomany area. Apart from some annoying scratchy ti-tree scrub in the bush off the roads, the country is easy, except when bluffs are encountered.

On the Sunday we motored back to the Bylong Road, then north to a place where, according to the county map, there is Crown Land on the right side of the road, affording good access to the wild country around Mt. Graham. This is about 12 miles out from Rylstone. We drove in along a bush motor track for about a half-mile and stopped when the track forked. Continuing on foot along the east fork through open forest country, we came to another branching. Here the right hand branch led along the Great Divide, but we took the left hand branch and left the track where we could see a rocky vantage point which formed a high ending to a spur off the Divide, jutting out east into rugged country. Beyond this, and further to the east, was a larger higher eminence, which was judged to be Mt. Graham. We battled through the scratchy scrub to reach what turned out to be a superb lookout. From these high rocks we reveled in a 360 degrees view of the surrounding grand country. To the north was a gap where the upper Growee Valley joins a wider valley at Growee Gulf - two passes flanked by towering sandstone bluffs. South was Rumker's Peak, known locally as the Sugarloaf, a tall cone of sandstone, and, slightly more westerly and nearer, the cleared top of Bald Mountain. ESE was the partially cleared top of Wheelbarrow Mountain, while NW were the big bluffs which overlook the Benjang Creek's eastern bank. Mt. Graham, about a mile and a half away across very rough country, was almost due east. Three bearings were taken of known or almost known objects, and the position lines crossed at practically the same point, thus giving us our position and verifying the objects on the map.

Time would not permit carrying on to Mt. Graham, so we retraced our steps back to the car, following tracks all the way, then motored north to Growee Gulf and through it, and continued along the road which traverses Growee valley in a more or less south-easterly direction. This is a wide and appealing pastoral valley, surrounded by bluffs, not quite as large or sheer as those that flank the Capertee Valley near Glen Davis.

On the Monday morning, having learned that we were not camped at the Bluff, we decided to devote the time to exploring the real Bluff and trying to identify the special camping access there. We found the Bluff to be less unusual in shape than the Bulga, but quite an impressive precipice of sandstone, nevertheless. We probably correctly located the campers' access, although there was a fence across between the road and the Bluff, with an opening in it wide enough for cars. The access ground is on both sides of the road, but campers would probably choose to stay at the foot of the Bluff on its eastern side, which gets the morning sun. This is a very good site, level and among open forest trees, not far from Cox's Creek and big enough to camp a very large party.

After a further talk with Mr. Mills, the exploration party headed for home.

Vegetation: In the open forests the predominating trees were "yellow scribbles", grey gums and stringybarks. Western angophoras appeared near Heffron's Hole after crossing the Divide, and cypresses were much in evidence, forming groves in parts and lending welcome variety of form and colour to the bush. We noted some geebung and were told of tree ferns in a gorge which runs down to the Growee Valley. Ti-tree scrub makes cross-country travel in shorts a bit scratchy, and we encountered "holly" (very spiky) around the Benjang Creek area. A few burrawangs were seen in places. No attempt was made to compile a comprehensive list.

Fauna: Here again we did not attempt completeness, but the following is a list of what we saw. (?) indicates uncertainty of identification.

Birds - Rock warbler (?), soldier birds (?), finches, gang-gangs, magpies, ravens, black and yellow cockatoos, red-breasted robins, crimson and eastern rosellas, yellow robins, sulphur-crested cockatoos, topknot and other pigeons, brown hawk, spurwing plover, various small parrots and parakeets, nankeen kestrels (?), lyrebirds, an owl or hawk (?) with a mottled brown breast.

Mammals - Grey forester (?) kangaroos, fox, rabbits, wombats (evidence of large numbers of these).

Insects - Various beetles, including diamond beetles, gregarious larvae (sawfly?) and various ants.

Summary and Comments:

This is an area of western marginal Triassic sandstone conglomerate country. As in other parts of the western margin, the rock tends to form well-sculptured outriders, in the form of stacks, towers or turrets. The sandstone conglomerate is subject to quite deep caving, as a result of both chemical "fretting" action and wind erosion, and this contributes to the scenery by adding rich yellows and whites to the colour scheme. In general the area is definitely scenic, it might be classed somewhere between the grand-scale chasm scenery of the upper Blue Mountains or the Lower Hawkesbury.

While it would undoubtedly form a valuable addition to our Faunal Reserves, it was the consensus of opinion among the party that it was quite good enough to be made a National Park. There is no National Park in country quite like this, on the western margin of the great plateau and in an area where there are some very interesting land shapes. Over its east-west dimension this country demonstrates some transition from the vegetation of the plateau

environment to that of the more westerly lands. Straddling the Great Divide, it lends itself well to the formation of a sky-line trail, which might one day be linked with other portions of the Divide to achieve a considerable length. There are many good vantage points for lookouts, and good access roads to different parts.

Alternatively, or in addition, this area has desirable qualities for a Faunal Reserve or Refuge, being wild and rugged and almost uninhabited, and is adjacent to huge areas of wilderness in the east. It is not inconceivable that it may one day be linked with Munghorn Gap, also on the Great Divide, forming a continuous chain of refuge for our threatened wildlife.

(The unabridged version of this report has been submitted to the National Parks Association and our recommendations are being considered.

Co-Editors)

NO NAMES MENTIONED

Anon.

The things one hears about club trips -

A certain attractive lady, well known to everyone, is in the habit of mislaying her belongings. Ready to start off on the day walk to Mt. Timms, she was heard to wail, "O, my gloves! I must have my gloves - I've left them in the tent". Patiently everyone stood around while the tent was undone and a thorough search made - no gloves. Such a worried look on that poor person's face. "Look in your string bag", someone suggests hopefully. "O, they were there all the time", blushes the lady.

And now, the incident of Paddy's socks -

These were found on a morning's walk to the creek, lying folded together so neatly, looking just like the person herself, I was told. Back went the finder to camp to confront the lady. "No, indeed, she had not lost any socks. Yes, she had changed into clean ones that morning but the dirty ones were in her rucksack. Why did everyone come to her when articles were found?" - indignantly.

The rounds of the camp produced no owner, so the finder jubilantly decided she had an extra pair of socks. Suspicion still centered round this one person. Again she was asked and again the indignant denial. "I'm sure they are hers", mutters the finder - "they look just like her". "Have they got a hole in the leg?" somebody asks. "Yes, was the answer. "Well, they are hers, I know, because I noticed it on Tuesday".

Keeping the socks for a few days, the finder eventually handed them over to their rightful owner, who received them with an apologetic air, admitting at last that they were hers.

Now, no offence intended. Aren't all these little idiosyncrasies part of all of us? They endear us to our companions who look upon us with kindly benevolence (we hope).

AN ANSWER TO WALLY

Janet Catford

Wally's article* set us wondering -
 We read with interest his every lurk
 On how to cut down and how to cut out
 The eternal round of household work.

He must LIKE the feel of a nylon sheet
 And a sliding pillow - they fill us with loathing!
 Drip-dry cottons - yes, they're time-saving,
 But much over-rated is non-iron clothing.

Wally suggests we invert our undies,
 And also our sheets, the laundry to shirk,
 But for the likes of us without a machine
 It's double detergent and treble the work.

Have YOU pierced roast pork with a plastic fork
 Or tried to sup from a cardboard cup?
 Then think of the cardboard plates - rows of -
 Creating a problem of 'how to dispose of'.

The lacey effect of an oft turned sock
 Could well solve the problem and save the day,
 But you'd have to remember which way to slew 'em,
 And sooner or later you'd give it away.

You must allow time for a couple to quarrel,
 For one to listen while the other one talks!
 But we'll try to get modern, streamlined, time-saving,
 And then we'll be out on a lot more walks.

* Wally's article appeared in WALKS & TALKS in January. If you missed it we still have a few copies of that issue left.

Co-Editors.

A VISIT TO MY GREAT GREAT GRANDMOTHER'S HOME

Judy Ellis

For those of you who were interested in Mrs. Elizabeth Hawkins' letter to her sister in which she described her trip across the Blue Mountains and of her settling in Bathurst in 1822, I thought you might like to hear of my visit to her home 143 years later.

The name of the property, as you may remember, is "Blackdown" and it is situated at Kelso, which is a few miles out of Bathurst, but from the home there is a beautiful view of the city and the intervening plains.

The house, of course, was built by convicts, of whom 50 were assigned to Mr. Hawkins, who was the Commissariat for Bathurst.

To enter the house I crossed the front verandah which is made of the traditional blocks of sandstone which are well worn with time, and was shown into the hall which runs straight through the house with rooms opening off each side. The ceilings are very high in contrast to the doorways which escaped my head by only a few inches. All the woodwork throughout is cedar, but unfortunately it is all now painted cream. The house is completely furnished with antique furniture, but not that which belonged to the Hawkins family.

There is a courtyard paved with convict handmade bricks which

originally divided the kitchen from the rest of the house. On these bricks the broad arrow is to be seen.

On the property there are twelve convict-built wells from which the water was obtained by winding the bucket down. These wells are still used today, but owing to the present drought the little water that is in them is too strongly flavoured with minerals for use.

While this home was being built, the Hawkins family lived in a small, flat-roofed cottage, which still stands. As far as I could see there is only one window and that is high up off the ground, near the roof. Owing to the absence of glass in those days, the open window was guarded by wooden slats, and these same slats are still there today.

From the brick wall which surrounds the garden, I could see across the paddocks to the mill which is still in use.

Unfortunately the property has been divided, so of the original 2,000 acres which the Government granted to Mr. Hawkins, only 1,000 now belong to "Blackdown".

A SHORT TRIP TO TASMANIA

Nance Stillman

My first trip to Tasmania was as a motoring tourist - not as a bushwalker! I motored aboard the "Empress of Australia" on a recent Saturday night - backwards! I was directed to park beside a semi-trailer with no cab. (I found out later that the cab section is removed beforehand and the loaded semis are run into the hold by large fork-lifts). Anyway, I backed carefully in until my weather shield was touching the tarpaulin over the load - which I considered quite close. Before I could slide across the seat and get out by the passenger door, three men lifted the back of the car a further three inches closer to the semi! Rubber chocks were then put against the wheels, and I noticed a collection of wire slings and hooks and chains by which, I suppose, some vehicles are anchored. Having parked the car I had no excuse for hanging about, and was directed out of the hold to the passenger decks. All the heavy vehicles, such as freighters and refrigerated vans and a large passenger bus, were loaded before the private cars, so that when we reached Hobart on Monday morning the private cars were unshipped within about twenty minutes of docking.

A great deal has been written about the "Empress", and I feel sure she is going to be an instant success and fulfill a great tourist need. She is a credit to her producers, being well designed, well staffed, very comfortable and extremely well organized, so that tourists have none of those irritations and problems that beset the worrying types.

Coming up on deck on Sunday morning I was astonished to find that we had lots of land showing on the port side, and as of course we were heading south, I wondered if the Captain was becoming absent-minded. However, it turned out that we had a very sick man on board: in fact during the night they thought he had died. Two nurses had been in attendance for some hours, and it was only their skillful care that had revived him. They needed a doctor urgently and the ship was heading into Twofold Bay to land the sick passenger at Eden. This was very interesting for all except the sick man and his family. Eden looks delightful from the sea. The ship blew two blasts and let down her anchor, and soon we could see people collecting along the cliffs near the little lighthouse to find out what it was all about.

We rolled gently among hundreds of leaping diving porpoises, and presently a fishing boat put out from the jetty - still loaded with the morning's catch, which was being packed into boxes with ice - but as this was an emergency she was bringing out the doctor. The ladder was lowered and the doctor leapt on and came aboard; meanwhile the fishing boat pushed off a little and waited for instructions, and we all gazed over the side. Presently the sick man, bundled in blankets, was carried down the landing steps, the fishing boat came alongside again, and with some difficulty the poor man was taken aboard and left resting on a pile of fishing nets. His wife and daughter and the doctor following him, and we then resumed our voyage. (Incidentally, I met them all on the N.E. coast of Tasmania about ten days later - the man had recovered very quickly ashore and was able to rejoin his party by air within a few days).

I am not proposing to describe Tasmania or the trip we did around that beautiful scenic island. We drove to the south-east coast, through the apple orchards, and, of course, to Mt. Wellington and the Hobart area; Eaglehawk Neck and Port Arthur; up the east coast and then down the centre and across to the western side. Then we went up to the north coast, which we travelled along almost from end to end, and we also took a drive down to Cradle Mountain on a glorious, still, autumn day. We were very lucky indeed with the weather.

Points that struck me as being of special interest were the extremely clean highways, with no litter anywhere. A lot of the highways are sealed, and those that are not are particularly well graded. Although the distances are never great, it takes a long time to drive over them because of the varied and beautiful scenery and also because of the terrific and numerous curves. We also noticed that all along the highways men seemed to be working - never in groups but always alone. Perhaps they collect the rubbish, clean out the gutters and generally tidy the edges. A sad feature was the extraordinary number of little dead bodies on every road. A lot of Tasmania is quite unspoiled and also uncultivated, and therefore there must be much more wildlife than in N.S.W., for instance. Little kangaroo rats, I think they were, and all sorts of small animals, must wander across the roads at night and come to grief under the wheels of vehicles.

Queenstown, approached from Hobart (a particularly beautiful drive enabling one to have a look at Lake St. Clair) has the most dramatic approach, and, from all accounts, the highest rainfall. We were gloomily informed that it only rains once a year there, and that is all the time! We arrived on a perfect autumn day, but it was raining heavily before morning.

The ranger at Cradle Lake was down by Dove Lake when we arrived. A road had recently been built there, and he told us that since the road was opened the two boats kept in the boatshed for hire at only 15/- per day, had both been destroyed - so much for the motoring public!

I saw various tracks starting out from near the Chalet and long to walk through the Reserve before any more roads are put in. It was only because of pressure from all the Bushwalking Clubs (including our Federation), that the scheme proposed by the tourist people in Tasmania to open up the Reserve has been abandoned. But one wonders for how long?

"Great things are done when men and mountains meet.
These are not done by scurrying in the street."

Blake.