

PRICE 1/-

No 39

WALKS AND TALKS



THE MAGAZINE OF THE
BUSH CLUB

Everywhere there are signs that Christmas is coming again. Christmas Bush laden with blossom ready to turn red, and later will come the Christmas Bells. The bright Christmas beetles are enjoying the gum blossom and the piercing song of the cicadas rings in the trees.

In the shops is the glitter of tinsel, the carol singers and the angels, and the weary shoppers laden with parcels in gaudy wrapping paper.

We have Christmas stamps on our letters and students are light-hearted with the lifting of the burden of examinations.

It is a time of sticky heat and flies, and sudden cold snaps. It is a time for eating rich food and being sorry afterwards.

But wherever you are and whatever you are doing, we wish you a

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Dorothy Bryant
Flora Graham
Co-Editors

"MYANGEE"

A Christmas Story for Children

By Dorothy Bryant

Myangee remembered the time of the great fight; how fierce warriors in war paint and brandishing spears, had come shouting and leaping out of the darkness upon the old men squatting by the fire; how her mother had not run away but had picked up a club and rushed in to aid Myangee's aged grandfather. Trembling with fright, Myangee had followed her. The old men were soon vanquished; the warriors, angry at missing the young men who were away hunting, had ransacked the camp, seized some of the women, including Myangee and her mother, and had made off.

Many days they walked, far into country unknown to Myangee. Her mother's steps were getting slower, drops of blood from her wounded side leaving a track in the white sand. One evening, as the sun was setting, Myangee's mother died. Myangee knew she must keep up with the men but they must not see her for she knew they had no use for children from another tribe. Skillfully Myangee tracked the cavalcade by day. At night, curled up against a rock or tree out of sight, Myangee cried a little before dropping off to sleep. She was only seven.

The day the men arrived at their camp Myangee hid in the hills until dark. Hunger and curiosity lured her nearer the camp. At the tantalizing smell of roasting wallaby, Myangee forgot caution and trod on a dry stick, which snapped. Roughly she was dragged into the firelight. An excited chatter broke out in a dialect she did not understand. The men pushed her over to their womenfolk, but they promptly pushed her back again. Myangee stood alone and forlorn, surrounded by alien people who did not want her.

Suddenly an old crone, bent with age, pushed through the women and children. She shambled over to the child. Myangee looked at her and she gazed a long while at Myangee. Then, without a word, the old woman took Myangee's hand and led her away.

Myangee remembered the comfort of that hard, gnarled hand: how the woman had led her to the shelter of her flimsy gunyah and given her a lily-root to eat. Myangee shyly called her "Kabbarli" (grandmother). The old woman wept at the remembered word. She burst into a torrent of speech, in Myangee's own language. Myangee learnt that "Kabbarli" had been captured long ago by the tribe. Now her husband was dead and she was too old for useful work. The tribe didn't want her and when they moved on to new hunting grounds she would be left behind, and so would Myangee, who was too young to be of use. Myangee knew that this desertion could mean death, but she gazed trustingly at "Kabbarli". The old woman patted Myangee's hand and told her to go to sleep.

The next day the tribe departed. "Kabbarli" and Myangee hid in the cover of trees until they had gone. "Kabbarli" in an excited, mysterious way, collected her meager belongings and beckoned Myangee to follow her towards the forbidding line of cliffs. They came to a narrow fissure, only wide enough for "Kabbarli" and Myangee to slip into sideways. Myangee was frightened but she kept squeezing and pushing along the narrow cleft behind "Kabbarli".

Suddenly the cleft widened and air and sunshine poured down! They were in a wide valley enclosed by high red cliffs. Many birds were flying about; palm trees waved lacy fronds in the breeze, and lily pools, reed-fringed, gleamed in the sunlight. Myangee stood amazed, and "Kabbarli" smiled knowingly. She told Myangee the alien tribe had been afraid of the cliffs - they thought they were the haunts of evil spirits, and had not ventured near them, but "Kabbarli" had, and had discovered this rich valley. Here, she told Myangee, they could live in peace, with water to drink and lily-roots and lizards and snakes and frogs to eat. "Kabbarli" said a good spirit lived in this place and Myangee believed her.

That evening, after "Kabbarli" had gone to sleep, Myangee crept down to the lily pool. Silver rays of moonlight flecked the surface. Myangee lifted her face to the sky, remembering her mother and father and friends, and the new friend she had found in "Kabbarli". A star shone brighter than the others in the sky. Myangee looked at it and thought: "It is the Good Spirit". And it was, for the self-same star shone on Bethlehem that Christmas night so long ago.



A TRIP TO THE OPAL FIELDS AND FLINDERS RANGES

By Beryl McLean

We set off in a brand new coach on 28th August, and camped at Gunnedah on the first night. Rising bright and early the next morning we went on to Narrabri where we collected the remainder of the party - seven Queenslanders - bringing the coach-load up to twenty-eight.

So far the new coach had been behaving very well. At Burren Junction however, we discovered we were almost out of diesel oil. After replenishments we were soon on the road again, travelling through drought-stricken country, depressed looking with dead and dying sheep everywhere.

In due course we arrived at Lightning Ridge, the first opal field we were to visit. Lightning Ridge is a small township with a local store, an hotel (painted mauve), called "The Diggers' Inn", and further down the tarred road is the Bush Nursing building, the opal

store, a garage and a tram-motel with an old Bondi tram prominently displayed. The trees around the town help break the glare of the sun on the white clay.

Most of the opal mining is now done at the Three Mile diggings, where we saw a number of people, as well as most of our enthusiastic coach members, puddling and looking for potch. At one mine we saw a woman and her small son working a winch, which was bringing buckets of clay to the surface. The buckets were being filled by the woman's husband working forty-five feet underground.

Before leaving this interesting opal field we visited Ball's Hill where for 2/- we went twenty-six feet below the surface to view the inside of a mine. The owner gave us an informative talk about the mining of opals. We noticed, too, how cool and fresh everything seemed to be in the mine.

We had to move on to Bourke, but before reaching the town we stopped to look at the new irrigation channels. The water for the channels is drawn from the Darling River and is used for watering the grass grown for sheep. The project cost £30,000 and is a private enterprise. An interesting feature at Bourke is the old "Cobb & Co. Carriers" sign outside the "Carrier Arms" hotel.

We reached White Cliffs late at night and camped in the dry creek bed. White Cliffs is a small town set in the middle of desert country - just one street and the usual hotel which had inside not only liquor but, on the wall beyond the bar, a row of drawings of local features done by an artist named Jobson. The Post Office had been built in 1898, and there is a small hospital, also an old church built in the eighties, which had been used first as a Masonic Hall. Twenty children attend the school, and the present population of White Cliffs is eighty.

Opal mining seems to be confined to one hill; everywhere else is just mounds of white clay, hollow in the centres, and all looking like outsize birds' nests.

Leaving White Cliffs, we moved on to Mootwingee, discovered by Ernest Giles in 1861. Set in a scenic gorge in desert country, Mootwingee is a Reserve of twenty-eight square miles. There are many interesting and unusual rock formations and caves and water-holes in the area. The aborigines of earlier days did carvings on the sloping rocks. These carvings, called 'pickings', were done by a small sharp-pointed instrument, and the work must have required a lot of patience. The water in the water-holes when we were there was brown and not very inviting owing to the drought conditions. So far this Reserve has remained untouched and is unspoiled in its natural setting.

Rain began to fall so the next day we moved on. The road was very slippery because of the rain, and after travelling about thirty miles our brand new coach slid off the road, and there we were, stuck in the rich red mud! The coach wouldn't budge. After all sorts of suggestions from coach members, everything was unloaded from the vehicle, branches were placed under the back wheels, and with much pushing and shoving by the mud-coated passengers, the coach regained the road. The mishap delayed us three hours and cut short our time in Broken Hill.

We crossed the N.S.W./S.A. border at Cockburn. Now the country appeared much improved and the sheep and cattle looked in good condition. After lunching in Peterborough we made our way toward Wilpena Pound in the Flinders Ranges, the country where Hans Heysen, the famous artist, used to like to paint. We arrived at the

Pound after dark, and had to pitch tents on rather wet ground.

Next morning we were up early, eager to explore this beautiful area. Wilpena Pound is a natural basin surrounded by a massive mountain wall. The entrance is along a creek flowing through a deep gorge. Everywhere there are native pine trees, river gums, short wattle trees and many beautiful wildflowers. The highest mountain is St. Mary's Peak (3,900 feet). Most of the party climbed the peak and we all enjoyed our roaming over this delightful place.

Repairs had to be made to the coach before we could move on to Rawsley's Bluff, Parachilna Gorge and other beautiful spots in the Flinders Ranges. On the way to Brachina Gorge, right in the middle of nowhere, the coach stopped. We had run out of diesel oil again! Fortunately, a passing motorist came to our aid and we were able to move on. Nearing Quorn, we camped, and the next day made a trip to Buckaringa Gorge. This is an unusual gorge of high red cliffs with razor-pointed edges.

The coach began to give more trouble but we managed to get to Warren Gorge and then on to Port Augusta, where further repairs had to be made to the bus. This delayed us for a day. We came back through the Barossa Valley, the home of the Australian wine-growing industry. We enjoyed the beautiful countryside - fruit trees in blossom and lovely flower gardens everywhere. Then on we came through the Murray Valley to Albury, and home: our eventful and beautiful holiday had finished.

NOTES FROM AN ITINERANT 'SURVEY RESEARCHER'

(extracted from letters from Rosalie Graham)

From Rockhampton

On Friday night a coachload of forty-one passengers arrived late at the hotel, after a series of troubles caused by rain-scarred roads. By this time the hotel staff had either gone off duty or were very busy attending to a fancy-dress dinner-dance in the hotel's reception room, so the coach passengers were turned loose upstairs to look for their rooms. It all became such a scramble - at first in trying to protect our own rooms, and then in helping travellers find theirs. We all joined in with the laughing exchange of tales.

This is an old hotel - built in 1855, but altered and added to since. Corridors and verandahs branch and join like a maze, and a stairway appears where you haven't seen one before and you think you'll never find the one you want until suddenly it's there just around the corner from your room! By the time the coach passengers arrived we knew our way about and were very useful to them. By midnight everyone had a bed and knew where the bathrooms and toilets were, and soon afterwards the dance ended so all was quiet again. Our rooms, by the way, open on to the hall and the balcony - with no key to either door - so you can understand we felt the need to protect them when bewildered and tired travellers were wandering around.

The drive to Mount Morgan is very pleasant. At one stage we climbed Razorback Range, which is quite steep, and gives wonderful views back over the plains to Rockhampton. Mount Morgan township on the slopes of the mountains itself, is situated on the Dee River which flows into the Don, which flows into the Dawson, which flows into the Fitzroy. We found a parking space near the mine buildings

and property, then went inside and spoke to the only man to be seen. He was the Ambulance Officer, and said if we hurried he would take us to join an inspection party. He drove us in what I suppose was the ambulance, up the hillside to the spot where a group of people were gathered. Here he handed us over to the guide and then left. We were at the edge of the crater which is the open-cut - a deep wide pit with a road encircling its sides as it winds down to the bottom. This was the original Mount Morgan; its top is now gone and the centre cut out and crushed for mineral deposits. The unwanted crushed remains are dumped. The booklet says the open-cut is 605 feet below the lookout, and that it is now lower than the old 850 feet level of the original underground mine. The modern machinery used since the re-opening deals again with the old waste from the original mine and they still get quite a good payable quantity of gold, silver and copper from it.

We saw the various refining processes, all very interesting, then at last we saw the wonderful red hot molten ore being poured out of a furnace into a great crucible at ground level. This crucible was lifted by a great crane and carried aloft to the next stage where it was poured into another furnace. Then later another full load was carried and poured into a third furnace. The heat from the molten metal could be felt well away from it, and showers of what looked like red sparks were spilled from the glowing stream pouring from crucible to furnace. We stood well away and were fascinated.

From Townsville

On Sunday as I was walking past a flat marshy piece of open land opposite the houses I was calling on, I watched two brolgas feeding and then dancing. It was as though they put on their ballet just for me. First they made graceful movements of bodies, long necks and heads, in a slow walk; then they leapt from the ground with big wings spread, advancing towards each other and retreating in a pattern of movement that was quite exciting. They made no attempt to fly, the wings just gave balance for the leaps. After five or ten minutes they went back to their feeding and I went back to work, asking people the same questions over and over again.

That day had another variation for me, too, apart from the brolgas. I climbed up and over part of Castle Hill to go home instead of walking along the streets or catching a bus or taxi, both of which are hard to find in Townsville. It was a beautiful warm calm afternoon. The air was very clear and I could see far into the distance as well as the scenes spread out close below me. It was very good to be using my climbing muscles again and finding footholds in the steep rocky surfaces.

One day I went over to Magnetic Island to pick up material that had been given out. It was to be a pretty easy day; nevertheless, it took up all my time because the people there have plenty of time to talk. During my lunch break I walked out over the low-tide flats to where there is a little coral colony which is slowly dying because of the dredging for Townsville Harbour. The silt is dumped in the channel between the island and the mainland, and this has muddied the water, and coral needs clear water to grow and live in. I was interested to see what there was on the flats, and found a group of sea-urchins with very long fine spines, rich red in colour, and an eye-like marking on each. The shell, between the spines, was splashed with patches of a lovely deep blue.

Note: Rosalie is also responsible for our cover this issue.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR NORTH-WEST

By Wally McGrath

I have been asked to write an article on my recent trip to the north-west of Australia - that part of the State of Western Australia north of latitude 26° - so this is my effort.

Although various things of interest happened on the way over to the west, in order to proportion my article to the size of the magazine I will start from the time I boarded the m.v. "Kabbarli" at Fremantle. It is interesting to note the derivation of the ship's name: it was called after Mrs. Daisy Bates, who spent almost the whole of her life living amongst and working for the welfare of the aborigines of Western Australia. She was known among them as "grandmother", or, in their language, "Kabbarli". The vessel "Kabbarli" had a displacement of 4,465 tons, and together with three similar ships, carries goods and passengers between the various north-west ports from Fremantle to Darwin. Sailing dates, however, are uncertain, as I found out.

The weather forecast just prior to leaving Fremantle was for gusty westerlies with occasional showers, but it proved to be much worse as a storm came up during the night. It put the radar direction-finder and the automatic steering out of action, and the vessel was delayed six hours. There were many vacant seats at the breakfast table next morning.

Just before entering the first port of call, Carnarvon, Dirk Hartog Island is passed. Dirk Hartog landed here in 1616, the first known white man to step on Australian soil.

Carnarvon is the end of the bitumen road to Perth. Beyond it are red soil roads, dusty in dry weather and muddy in wet. The recent heavy rains had closed the roads to all traffic except the more venturesome drivers. The jetty at Carnarvon is about half a mile long to give sufficient depth of water for small coastal vessels such as the "Kabbarli". A tram takes passengers and goods into the town about 2½ miles away, over sand hills, swamps and the Gascoyne River. This town is known to residents of the eastern states mainly because it is the location of the space-tracking station. To the West Australians, however, the town and district are renowned for sheep-raising, banana plantations, salt production and semi-tropical vegetable gardens which bring wealth to the residents and provide food for the state.

An American space-craft was due over the town a few days after the ship called and many of the residents were busy laying out the name 'Carnarvon' in white sea-shells on a large open field of red sand. The astronauts were going to look out for the sign. As outside news on the boat was irregular, I never heard whether the scheme worked or not.

The next port of call, Onslow, brings the traveller close to that part of the north-west now prominently in the news: North-West Cape, where the Americans are constructing a ULF communication-complex which will, in conjunction with a similar station in the U.S.A., give complete direction-finding information to all submerged submarines in the Indian Ocean. The chief feature of this installation is Tower Zero, 1271 feet high, the highest man-made structure in the southern hemisphere. It can be seen for miles before passing the Cape on the way to Onslow.

Behind this cape is Exmouth Gulf and the town of Learmonth, an RAAF base which, during the war, was a submarine station. Inland from this gulf is Rough Range where oil was first found in Australia, but not in promising quantities. However, there is now renewed interest in this area.

Onslow itself recently suffered severe damage as a result of cyclonic conditions in the area, and the future of the town is still in doubt. The jetty cannot be used and all landing from the ship has to be done by lighters, so no passenger could go ashore at this port. Onslow was the supply and communications centre for the detonation of the first atomic bomb in 1952, in the nearby Monte Bello Islands.

Half a day's sail from Onslow the "Kabbarli" called at Barrow Island to unload goods for the oil wells here. This oil installation is second only to Mooney in importance, but it is not yet sufficiently advanced to be put into commercial production. However, its construction is proceeding rapidly. The company working it is called "Wapet", short for Western Australia Petroleum, made up of a number of oil companies and an American oilfields firm. No facilities were available for landing passengers.

About 10 to 15 miles further north we passed the Monte Bello Islands, which are sandy, low and featureless, like all the off-shore islands along the north-west coast. Between Monte Bello Islands and the next port one could see out to sea huge columns of water rising into the air at frequent intervals. This was caused by underwater explosions used in the examination of the Continental Shelf for oil deposits. Such explosions were the reason for the Japanese complaint recently that their fishing boats were being shelled.

Point Sampson, the next port, consists of a jetty with a tramway to a goods yard and about a dozen houses, with bulk fuel oil tanks owned by Australian Blue Asbestos Pty. Ltd. This port is the shipping base for the asbestos mined in the Wittenoom Gorge further inland. Around the coast in the next bay lies the old ghost town of Cossack, once the capital of the "North-West". Now only roofless stone buildings remain. Inland about 14 miles is the town of Roeburne, hot, dry, dusty and stony, with a population of 145. The country around Point Sampson is mostly red sand with outcrops of granite and ironstone and is covered with spinifex and Sturts Desert Pea, which was in full bloom during my visit.

An overnight sailing brought us to perhaps the most progressive town on the whole north-west coast, Port Hedland. This is a boom town where the population has more than doubled in the last six months. It is the main shipping port for manganese ore mined in the Pilbara fields nearby. Copper, antimony, lead, tantocolumbite, beryl, zinc and chrome ores are also mined in this field. Marble Bar is the chief town of this mining area.

At the present time iron ore deposits are being developed in the Hammersly Ranges inland, and various companies are carrying out extensive development work. Mt. Newman Iron Ore Company is building a 259 mile railway from Mt. Newman to Port Hedland. The Hammersly Iron Ore Pty. Ltd. is building a 170 mile line from Mt. Tom Price to King's Bay near Port Hedland, and also a 70 mile line from Mt. Goldsworth to the Port. A large dredge is at present deepening the harbour at Port Hedland, and the headquarters for all work associated with these activities is in the town. Wool, sheep, cattle and fishing are still thriving industries here as well.

Northward from Port Hedland, stretching as far as Broome, lies the Great Sandy Desert. On the map it is just a blank. Twenty-four hours' sailing brought us to Broome. This port can only be entered at high tide as the tides have a rise and fall of twenty-eight feet twice in every twenty-four hours. Ships entering at high tide are left high and dry when the waters recede and have to wait for the next high tide before they can leave. A new deep-sea jetty is being constructed some distance from the town and will allow entry and exit of ships irrespective of tidal conditions.

The brochure which I have states that Broome has the hottest month in April, with an average temperature of 94°; the coolest month being July, with an average temperature of 82°. The town of Broome covers an area of two square miles and has one hotel, one bank, one store, two schools and two churches. No building is closer to its neighbour than about five blocks. Pearling is now almost a thing of the past. What is left of the pearling fleet is mainly engaged in crayfishing further south. Many old pearling luggers lie beached and rotting away among the mangrove swamps.

After a hot and dusty morning in this scattered town, I returned to the ship, dry and thirsty, and decided to relax; "half-time", one might call it, from the compilation of this report. Thus, under the influence of the elixir of the Swan Brewery's product, I rested.

Broome represents that part of the romantic north-west which is passing. The great pearling days are over and the great loneliness is returning. To the south, Port Hedland is booming: to the north the Ord River and Kimberly areas are growing in importance. I see no future for Broome except as a port for a limited number of cattle from the nearby fringe cattle country. The present population of Broome is 1600. On the Soldier's Memorial in the centre of town, fifty-seven names are listed as killed in the First World War, and only seven are recorded for World War II.

Off again on the way to Derby, the termination of my sea trip, where I have to take to the air because of delays in sailing dates.

Derby, with a population of 1900 is the gateway to the western Kimberlys, and is the centre of a large cattle-raising industry. The taxi driver I engaged to take myself and luggage to the hotel told me it had been 100° the previous day and it would be the about same today. I think it was a good estimate; after walking up and down the main street my nice best pair of black shoes were covered in red dust. The locals wear tan shoes and boots which do not show the dust. The water supply of this and other north-west towns already visited is from bores and is quite palatable to drink.

Derby is noted for its baobab trees, growing wild and some cultivated, and the large number of cockatoos which shelter in the shade of the branches. There is a nice tiled swimming pool in the centre of town, and there amongst the school children and the aborigines, I had my first swim of the season.

Because of an extensive plane delay, I flew to Darwin in the dark, so I saw no more of the north-west. I crossed the Western Australia/Northern Territory border at 10 p.m., and there my report must close.

WALKING

The following extracts are from an essay entitled "Walking" written by C.M. Trevelyan -

"I have never known a man go for an honest day's walk, for whatever distance, great or small, and not have his reward in the repossession of his own soul."

"One school of walking is that of the road walker, the Puritans of the religion. A strain of ascetic rigour is in these men. But to my thinking, the road walkers have only grasped one part of the truth. The road is invaluable for pace and swing... but the secret beauties of nature are only unveiled to the cross-country walker."

(That sounds like a good Bush Club member)

"Variety can be obtained by losing the way - a half conscious process, which in a sense can no more be done of deliberate purpose than falling in love... And yet a man can sometimes very wisely let himself drift, either into love or into the wrong path out walking. There is a joyous mystery in roaming on, reckless where you are, into what valley, road or farm chance and the hour is guiding you."

(Perhaps we should not put him down to lead a walk though.)

"If the walker seeks variety of bodily motion, other than the run down hill, let him scramble. Scrambling is an integral part of walking. To know and love the texture of rocks we should cling to them; and when mountain-ash or holly, or even the gnarled heather root, have helped us at a pinch, we are henceforth on terms of affection with all their kind. No one knows how sun and water can make a steep bank of moss smell all ambrosia till he has dug foot, fingers and face into it in earnest. And you must learn to haul yourself up a rock before you can visit those fern-clad inmost secrets where the Spirit of the Gully dwells."

"The walker has his social duties. He must be careful not to leave gates open, not to break fences, not to walk through hay or crops, and not to be rude to farmers. He should burn or bury the fragments that remain from lunch. To find the neighbourhood of a stream-head on some well-known walking route littered with soaked paper and the relics of the feast is disgusting to the next party. And this brief act of reverence should never be neglected, even in the most retired nooks of the world, for all nature is sacred."

"All rules may thus be summed up: 'Give no man, woman or child just reason to complain of your passage'."

(Could well be included in our Code of Ethics)

"I have set down my own experiences and likings. Let no one be alarmed or angry because his ideas of walking are different. There is no orthodoxy in walking. It is a land of many paths and no-paths, where everyone goes his way and is right."

(extracted by Flora Graham)