

NEWCASTLE RAMBLERS BUSHWALKING CLUB

50TH ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE



E Raine

The Cover

Lake Pedder was a natural lake located in the southwest of Tasmania which had a unique and pristine ecology. It was controversially dammed by the Tasmanian Hydro Electric Commission as part of the Upper Gordon River hydro-electric generation scheme and in 1972 was flooded to form the Huon-Serpentine impoundment. The expanded 'new' Lake Pedder has an area of about 242 km² and is considered to be the largest freshwater lake in Australia.

The cover depicts a sandy shore of the original Lake Pedder, which was visited by the Ramblers in 1970. The images of some of the party, included in the scene by the artist Ethel Raine, are symbolic of our members over the decades.

Acknowledgements

Elsewhere in the magazine are reproductions of artwork by Wayne Devonshire, Lisa Parkinson, Ethel Raine, Jeff Fair and others whose work has appeared in previous Club magazines. We acknowledge their considerable talent and thank them for the artistic gifts that have enhanced our enjoyment over the last 50 years.



Credit is also due to the many Ramblers who have taken so many brilliant photographs during Club activities, some of which illustrate articles in this magazine. An expanded collection is available in the companion **50th Anniversary Photo Collection**, available in colour print and as a CD.

The assistance is gratefully acknowledged of Bob Clifton, Grace Farley, John Hendriks, David Morrison, Joan Robinson, Peter Rye, John Sharples, Marise Wilson and Kate Zimmerman.

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President's Message

Robert Gascoigne
Ramblers President
2010 and 2011



The founding members of the Ramblers Club could not possibly have foreseen in 1961 that over the following 50 years their Club would grow to 190 members. To prosper and grow like this an organisation has to be highly successful in fulfilling the wants and needs of its members. That is what this Club has achieved. The backbone of this success is, in large part, the enthusiasm of members to give generously of their time in organising and leading the many walks and other activities.

The Club is committed to training and passing on skills and know how. It mentors new and potential leaders. This has generated a resourceful membership that has many excellent leaders with knowledge of great walks locations. It is a very active Club with a surfeit of well patronised activities. Through their participation and training, many of our members have developed a sound knowledge of navigation, safe bushwalking and first-aid. It is a very friendly Club, where newcomers are warmly welcomed and over the years most members have made many close and lasting friendships.

And we must not forget that the management and running of the Club has always been successfully accomplished by talented and hard working members, all working on a voluntary basis.

This year the Club has awarded **Life Membership** to two existing members, David Morrison and Arthur Radford, and one past member, Barry Collier, in recognition of their enthusiastic and dedicated service over many years.

The Ramblers Club is vibrant and effective in what it does. It's all about the outdoors, the beauty and variety of the Australian bush, the challenging day walks, the summer evening twilight walks, the backpacks, the bike rides, the social activities, the car camps, the extended trips to many parts of Australia and overseas, the adventure, and above all, the friendships.

I believe the Club will continue to grow and prosper, and I am willing to wager that the Ramblers will still be here fifty years from now.

— Robert Gascoigne

Introduction

The inspiration to form a bushwalking club came from the legendary Selby Alley who in 1961 led a group of Newcastle YMCA members on a bush walk. This attracted a keen group of bushwalkers and in October of that year the YMCA Ramblers Bushwalking Club was formed. The six original members – Barry Allan, Brian Burn, Brian Thomas, Allan James, Keith Parry, Neil Jobling – met each week in the YMCA premises in King Street, Newcastle. The YMCA was in an old and rather run down building but it did provide a meeting place and an opportunity for the embryonic group to learn about bushwalking and practice their skills, in fact meetings often closed with some members abseiling down the building's stairwell! The Club soon developed a critical mass of talent and its early activities included bushwalking, camping, caving, rock climbing and orienteering, usually within the Hunter region. Getting to distant places was always a bit of a problem. As one early member recalls 'we didn't go very far afield as we didn't have much gear, didn't have reliable transport and could ill afford the cost of fares'. All walks started from the 'Opera House', a little park next to Hamilton Fire Station where, importantly, there is a shelter shed with a distinctively shaped roof.



The early Club drew from a YMCA youth group and had quite a few teenage members. The 'Y' ran youth challenge activities – a Camping club for 8 to 12 year olds, and the Wanderers for 12 to 16 year olds – and these progressed to the Ramblers. The Club's focus on youth led to it achieving a strong outdoors orientation. It joined the NSW Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs and contributed to the Confederation Search and Rescue teams. Courses on first aid and bushcraft were conducted and a book 'An Introduction to Bushwalking' was produced. The bushwalking courses, which were run frequently through to 1984, were also a steady source of new members.

The scope of activities was influenced by the interests of strong and capable leaders. Expertise in map reading, abseiling and caving led to an increased focus on these activities and the strong promotion of orienteering led to an excellent orienteering contest with the Ramblers, Newcastle Bushwalking Club and Sydney bushwalkers. A geologist member stimulated interest in rocks and structures. A guest lecture by Ray Northey led to field trips to sites of Aboriginal art. There was a steady interest in conservation, no

doubt sparked by serious political / environmental issues in the 1970s and 80s. Locally there were the threats to the integrity of Blackbutt Reserve. Nationally there were such issues as the controversial damming of the Huon and Serpentine Rivers that drained into Lake Pedder and the Ramblers visited southwest Tasmania in 1971. There was also strong interest in the Hunter region's flora and a growing ability to identify the plants and trees encountered on walks. The Club's search and rescue capability was well organized and a plan was kept whereby members could be called out if they were needed.

As the teenagers grew the Club became a popular meeting venue for young men and women. More cars became more available, transport difficulties eased and the scope for travel widened. Quite a few romances blossomed and became enduring marriages, and the membership changed as people moved away to follow job and career openings – some to Sydney, others interstate and a few overseas.

Accessing suitable gear was an ongoing problem and the Club became a conduit for swapping and trading equipment: this morphed into the popular annual Club Auction that we know today. By the early 1970s the Club had grown to about 30 members and in 1970 the first Club magazine was produced. The technology was typewriters, wax stencils, red correcting fluid and Gestetner printing machines, and a lot of persistence. The magazines were embellished with the first of many beautiful artwork covers and sketches drawn by Wayne Devonshire, Lisa Parkinson, Ethel Raine and others.

Tragedy struck the Club in 1972 with the death of George Davies in a car accident and later that year with Gary Scully, died after being crushed by a falling tree branch while bushwalking in Carnarvon Gorge in Queensland. He was a leading figure in the Club and his passing was deeply felt by many members. Gary is now remembered by the annual photo competition and the perpetual trophy he bears his name.

As membership increased, the Ramblers became the largest of the YMCA's clubs. The YMCA had a series of premises in King Street, Newcastle and later in Crebert Street, Mayfield. The Club was shifted around – 'we had every room except the Ladies toilet!' – and then the time came when the buildings were to be used for youth hostels. The Club searched for a new meeting place. After 1973 it met at the Adamstown Uniting Church, and then in a YMCA leased building in Tighes Hill before finding a home

in 1984 at the hall of the hospitable Uniting Church at Charlestown, where the Ramblers still meet.

In the next few decades the Club grew in membership, in experience, and in reputation. It also ventured further afield with trips deeper into national parks and valleys, to other states, the Northern Territory and to New Zealand. As Club activities became more diverse, there came the realisation that while activities were being conducted carefully, they did bring risks that had to be managed and insured. There were doubts about the YMCA's goals and financial viability, and a feeling that the Ramblers were heading in a different direction. These and the accommodation problems were the main triggers for change. The Club wanted to manage its own affairs and broke away from the YMCA in March 1993. It was formally incorporated as the Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club the following year.

The Club has not looked back. Its activities are managed for risk and good practice through guidelines and structured training talks, by the mentoring of leaders, by abseil training and accreditation, and by remote area first aid training by certified trainers. It provides ready access to its guidelines and procedures through its comprehensive web site.

In 2011 the Ramblers has about 190 members, with ages ranging from 8 to 83 years. The Club meets fortnightly with activity reports, training talks, guest speakers and member's photos and supper.

Last year 2010 there were 51 day walks, 30 twilight walks, 29 car camps, 20 backpacks, 4 canyon abseiling trips, 14 canoe excursions (including the circumnavigation of Lake Macquarie), 33 bike rides, 5 landcare community service activities, 7 trips to music and art festivals, 5 social activities, participation in the NSW Navshield competition, and 11 extended trips to distant places including Tasmania, Victoria, Northern Territory, the Snowy Mountains, Lord Howe Island, Egypt and Jordan.

This magazine is a celebration of the achievements of the Newcastle Ramblers. It tells the story of what we've done over the past 50 years, where we've been and the fulfilment that we've experienced through bushwalking and our related activities. We have also given back, both to individuals and the community, through leadership, skills development and recent involvement in landcare programs.

We hope you enjoy reading about the Club and the accomplishments of its members.

— Peter Farley

Memories of the early Days

Barry Collier



[Barry has been a member of the Club for over 40 years and at various times President, Treasurer, Walks Leader and a leader in bushwalking courses. Now a life member, he talks here about the early days when it was the Newcastle YMCA Bushwalking Club. Ed]

When the Ramblers first started Newcastle was a different place. The trains were driven by steam engines, coal fired tugs berthed off the end of Watt Street and goods train marshalling yards, where movement was by steam engines, were just to the Nobbys side of the Custom House. On a still winter's morning, the smog was really something. Thankfully a coal fired power station on the other side of the marshalling yards had just ceased work; it had been worse then.

If you wanted fruit or vegetables, you went to a green grocer and told the person behind the counter what you wanted and took what you were given. There were no McDonalds or KFC, no NBN Channel 3, tea bags and instant mashed potato hadn't been invented, instant coffee was still a bit of a novelty and if you had a headache, you took a Bex powder.

I was the first YMCA member to have a car with flashing indicator lights and had the first car with seat belts, quite a novelty. A well groomed bushwalker wore leather boots, with hobnails and triconies on the soles. I gained my initial bushwalking experience through fishing clubs and was made well aware of the value of Dunlop Volleys. I was definitely the odd man out wearing shoes instead of boots.

For overnight trips, we used A tents and those with a bit more money used tents with walls, but tent floors were something to dream about, which was why we were so fussy about groundsheets. Flys were put over the top to make the tent a bit more waterproof. Some people, prepared to carry a bit more weight, took blow up mattresses. I used to look around for stands of Common Ground Fern to make a pad to lie on.

Of course some of the places we went to were a bit different to what they are now. For starters, there was no NPWS and very few national parks. I think the

only ones in our area were Bouddi NP, one of the country's first, and Brisbane Water NP, considerably smaller than it is now. Blue Mountains NP was not a lot smaller than it is now, but there was no Kanangra-Boyd or Wollemi NPs and no national parks on the Barrington Tops.

In the Watagans, Mount Falk Road was a difficult walking track, while Slippery Rock Road could be traversed by ordinary cars. In fact, our first Ramblers reunion was held at the end of a road off Slippery Rock Road and no one had any trouble getting in or out. To get to Boarding House Dam we had a choice of via The Pines, or up from Quorrobolong.

If we wanted to go to Gap Creek Falls, then known as Brown's Falls, we walked upstream from the end of Martinsville Road. Abbotts Falls was quite a hike and for the last 100 metres there was a very steep descent with the assistance of a permanently fixed wire rope. The limestone formations beside the falls were really something before vandals discovered them and created a lot of damage.

Over towards The Pines was Deverell's Fire Tower, a towering, wooden structure, which made an easy to find meeting place, and as security was of little importance in those days, some great views from the top. There was no shop, or service station at Brunkerville Gap and a homeward stop at Freemans Waterhole milk bar / café was almost compulsory. We became quite well known by the proprietor of the service station on the southern side of the road and a popular day walk was from there to Heaton Lookout.



Most of the trails in the Blue Mountains were created during the 1930s depression, so walks were pretty much the same as now, but a popular feature was the number of roadside stalls selling apple cider (non alcoholic of course). At Kanangra Walls, there was a very large sandstone cave, with a wooden floor in it, where all the local settlers got together for a do every now and then.

Barrington Tops was quite a bit different to what it is today. If we wanted to go to the Selby Alley Hut, we had to start our walk from the Barrington Guest House, walk almost to Rocky Crossing and then up a steep track to Lagoon Pinch. We then followed the present road to a cairn, with a sign on it to O'Grady's

Hut. From there, there was no track. The hut was 450° magnetic from the cairn. If you were a good navigator, you walked straight to the hut. If you weren't, then when you hit Hut Creek, you had to toss a coin to decide whether to go upstream or downstream to the hut. Of course, there were a lot of obstructions on that 450° line, but we soon realised that if we only passed those obstructions to the left, then, when we reached Hut Creek, it was only a short walk downstream to the hut.

Access to the Paterson was a problem. Now you just drive up into the national park. In those days the road ended at a property owned by a character called Jolliffe, who didn't like bushwalkers. We had planned routes through his property and adjoining bushland so we could get up into the state forest without him knowing.

If you wanted to go to Polblue Swamp, you drove from Scone, up to Hunter Springs and then walked, or 4WD drove down the Barrington trail, to where it crosses Polblue Creek and then walked downstream to the swamp.

Closer to home, I remember reports of a fabulous Aboriginal art site, called Burragurra. If you were fit and a good navigator, you could leave home fairly early and get there in time to have a look around before dark, then have time for another look in the morning, before heading for home. Of course, now you park your car 200 metres from the summit.

While there were few national parks, there was a lot of crown land, containing some wonderful areas, accessible only by walking and without any of the crowds we now find in most great areas. There were also a lot of active groups trying to establish national parks. The Barrington Club was very active in trying to create Barrington Tops NP. The Colong Committee was very active with what is now Kanangra-Boyd NP. The Myall Lakes Committee was working very hard on a Myall Lakes NP. And the Newcastle Flora and Fauna Protection Society was working very hard to achieve a Goulburn River NP. There were of course many others, but what a godsend it was when the NPWS was finally created.

Generally speaking, property owners in remote areas were more than happy for bushwalkers to cross their properties. They knew bushwalkers did little, if any damage and provided good company for people who saw very few other people. I remember being told that if I wanted to walk across a property in a remote area, I should contact the owner, who would then

want me to stay the night. If I didn't ask permission, he would come out shooting. He wouldn't aim at me, but some of them were really crook shots. I actually had that experience once and it was a bit unnerving to say the least. I had done the right thing, but a family member was not made aware of it.

As you can see from the above, there have been some amazing changes in the last 50 years and while I am tempted to wonder about what might happen in the next 50, it has been so great starting my bushwalking career back then and enjoying and appreciating all the wonderful changes.

— Barry Collier

These little pieces come from old Club Magazines.

Do you remember

Williams River

The Club's history in the Williams started with many failures. Attempts to explore the River were many, notably by Neil Jobling and John Smyrk (of Search and Rescue Practice fame) – but each attempt seemed never to get all the way from Selby's Hut to RockyXing. Then, in early 1965, in **cold** conditions, Dill Morgan, Phil Clare, Baz Allan and Sam Hobbs not only made it, but made it in **one** day!

A party of eleven took **two** days in 1970.

Orienteering

Our first orienteering contest was held on 24 July 1966. A few months before we had seen a film on orienteering as part of a map and compass night, and had decided to try it out. Allan Wright and Glenn Grantham organised it for the 25 contestants.

The contest has been held every year since. Barry Collier won the first one, but ever since the NBC has been victorious. We, however, got our own back on them with Allan Wright and Steve Fabris winning their 1966 contest, and Barry Collier and Ron Shea winning their 1969 contest.

We have not been successful in Paddy Pallin's contest **yet**, but we keep trying ... sometimes its said we're very trying.

What's in Bushwalking

[This article from the Club archives was written by Neil Jobling, a foundation member and Club President in 1962, 1964 and 1965. Some minor editorial changes have been made to the original handwritten piece, but the thoughts and feeling of a bushwalker in the 1960s remain true today. Ed]

There are many reasons why I like bushwalking, and it's difficult to single out any one of these as being more important than the others.

First there are the challenges. I am challenged by other people's achievements. The challenge may be an obstacle such as a mountainside, an area of dense scrub or a secluded desert valley; each one challenges



me in some way. There are many small fears, and sometimes large ones, which grip a person when they attempt to live this ragged, primitive life, completely out of their normal environment, and each fear presents a challenge to be overcome.

The pioneering spirit comes into it too. I like the idea of exploring virgin country, seeing things and places that few people have seen, camping in secluded places where the pioneering spirit comes to the fore and travelling through country which many would consider well nigh impossible.

Self reliance is a wonderful feeling. Bushwalkers carry all they require, are capable of travelling quite large distances through wild country and know that they can stay alive, reasonably comfortable and composed for quite a few days.

Bushwalking helps us to see life in perspective. It shows how much we rely on others, how much co-operation and team work has gone into building our civilisation and how much it requires to keep our communities running in a civilised manner. Bushwalkers can appreciate how insignificant, weak and incapable one person alone might be and brings into contrast the strength of comradeship.

Bushwalking brings one face-to-face with Nature. There are the myriad encounters with breathtaking natural beauty, whether it is in some delicate flower, or a mighty forest giant, some indescribable little spots with a bubbling brook and cool, mossy surrounds or a mighty waterfall. There are innumerable things of delight and beauty to be discovered. This type of beauty is one that no human could design or even imagine. When I gaze from some high vantage point onto a vast, majestic scene, or stand in a great wild forest, or feast my eyes upon some awesomely rugged vista, I marvel at the grandeur, majesty and beauty of nature, and feel small and fragile. When I look upon a vast star-studded sky, at the fluffy white clouds by day, at a sky heavy with rain clouds, at the ferocity of a wild storm, or the mists, fogs and the bite of a chill wind, I am cherishing and storing experiences. When I really look at the elements, I see magnificence in them all, might in some and beauty in others.

Bushwalking offers excellent scope for people who are keen on geology, biology, botany, photography, map reading and navigation. I am sure that no one who enjoys bushwalking could doubt the existence of a Master in the design of the boundless might and beauty which is found everywhere.

The pace of modern living can be very wearying and to live for a couple of days in the quiet, peaceful easy-going atmosphere of a bushwalk is very enjoyable. It gives time for reflection and contemplation and one's outlook becomes as wide-open, expansive and peaceful as the environment. Bushwalking is a healthy pastime, both physically and mentally.

A bushwalk can be planned to cater for the desires of almost every type of person. The tough energetic ones can tackle a rough, lengthy trip which will expend their excess energy. Those less energetic can spend a lazy time in some quiet spot. However something that most bushwalkers learn is that they are capable of a great deal more than they think in physical exertion, courage and withstanding hardship and mental stress, and that in normal life people rarely extend themselves to anything like their utmost capability.

And when you return from a bushwalk, you appreciate the ease, luxurious comfort and effectiveness of our modern communities, an appreciation which is sadly lacking among many.

— Neil Jobling

Lament of a Bushwalker's Mother

In my time I have been, short term but expensively, mother to a junior soccer player, boy scout (lately known as a pointy head), and a basketballer. Enthusiasm runs high in our family for the beginning of almost everything, then wanes quickly, gently sags in the middle and expires. So what's with this bushwalking bit; it does seem to go on and on.

To be a mother to one of these coolies is to live life in several distinct, repetitious periods. There's the weekly meeting which is the least distressing. That just means a very early dinner, casting broad hints to Father that it is his turn to run into the YMCA, and then that last minute 50mph dash through the city. After one such meeting, this coolie we live with returned with his usual uncanny timing just as we were finishing a late dinner. Under his arm a very thin piece of rolled fabric. In my innocence I asked:

'What's that?' – 'A two man tent' – 'Did you hire it?' – 'No, I'm just carrying it' – 'Is it to share then?' – 'Yes' – 'Who are you sharing with?' – 'Wendy' –

The crash of cutlery on my plate could be heard two blocks away and I tried to lift my gaping mouth above the table level. Father, immovable, unshakable and stolid, ate steadily with his eyes fixed firmly on his plate.

But that's nothing. It's the preparation for the actual walk that brings the trauma, frustration and chaos to a household not readily known for its organised domestic policy. This entails days of having dehydrated foods and diabetic scales set up on the dining room table. Endless lists of essentials and lists of definitely non-essentials that I keep trying to slip in surreptitiously. I look at those tatty dried apricots, that awful commercial dehydrated dinner. I ask 'are you the same fella who dared to criticise my *coq au vin*?' But to hear the bushwalker waxing eloquent on the food value, compactness and weightlessness jolts one into realising that the word "taste" seems never to be used.

And, of course, there's clothing. I gird up my loins for the usual fight which I have won only on the first trip out. But still I try, insisting that there could be a freak fall of snow in summer and that he's sure to fall in the water. My mother always taught me to change daily, and I think the younger generation ought to consider socks really dirty before they are capable of doing a 14 mile trail bash alone and upright. OK umbrellas are out!

Packing is something I don't want to know about. Having contributed to the pack from Paddy Pallin (now there's a name that sends dollar signs thumping against the base of my skull) I simply don't want to know how everything can go in there and remain uncrushed as I'm assured it does.

—Tony Nolan's mother

Brian Thomas, true grit

At the Club's recent 50th Anniversary dinner, I was disappointed to see none of the foundation members able to attend. One who certainly would have been there, if he was still alive, was Brian Thomas, and I am sure he was looking down at the proceedings. Brian was an enthusiastic member of the Club in the 1960s. He was a keen bushwalker, joined in many walks in the Hunter region and he did so notwithstanding his growing disabilities.

At the age of 6, Brian was attacked by a dog and suffered serious injuries, including facial injuries. The trauma of that attack is thought to have brought on a severe form of type one diabetes. In those days the medical profession was not as able as it is now to treat the illness and when I first met him, he was giving himself what I thought were huge injections twice a day. He eventually informed me that he had been given a life expectancy of 32, but that didn't take into account his tenacity and he survived till 54.

When I first met him, he was an apprentice pastry cook and after gaining his qualifications he opened a shop in what is now the northern entrance to Charlestown Square. He wasn't there long, before his doctors told him he would be blind in a few years. He had always had a dream of being a scuba diver, so, with that news, he sold his business and took off to Cairns, where he qualified as a scuba diver. He had a wonderful year or so, diving on the Great Barrier Reef, until his sight got too poor.

Back at home he started preparing for the inevitable and acquired the obligatory white cane. He would then blindfold himself and go walking, at first, just around the block, and then further afield, so he could learn to use it properly. He learnt Braille, but then decided that was only for blind people and most of his friends were not, so 'he went and joined the young chicks at tech' and learnt to touch type.

A few years after losing his sight, he became a member of the Newcastle West Lions Club and for several years was their bulletin editor. Around that

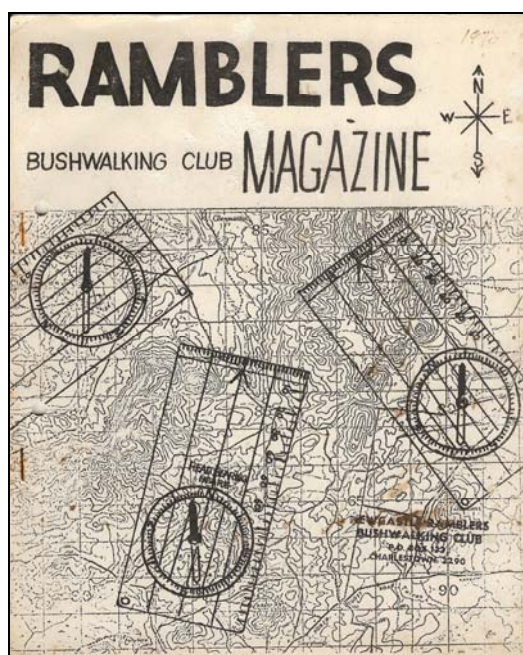
time, the diabetes association decided it should have a Hunter branch and he became the foundation president.

In that role he would travel all around the state, on his own, on public transport, lecturing people about diabetes. At one stage he came to the Rotary Club I belonged to as a guest speaker. He used my elbow instead of the white cane and it was quite some time before the members began to realise he was blind.

After his mother died, the garage was no longer needed for parking cars, so he had a kiln installed and took up pottery, creating some quite useful items. In the meantime, like most type one diabetics, he had continuing medical problems. He had open heart and kidney surgery. His doctors wanted to amputate both legs below the knee. He reckoned he couldn't operate a wheel chair while blind, so he refused. He had a number of toes amputated, along with other sections of his feet, but he was able to still keep hobbling along with his white cane.

I have been around for a long time now and have been involved with countless clubs and institutions, but I have never met anybody who so defined the term **true grit**. I just hope he has found a marvellous spot up there, or wherever we go, and I really can't imagine anyone going through life the way he did without some sort of Australia Day, or Queens Birthday award.

— Barry Collier



The cover to the Club magazine, 1970

The Great Debate

'That Geologists are a Menace on Bushwalks'

The opposing teams were lined up, ready, waiting. The Chairman, Graham Lacey, called for order and announced the topic to be debated:

'That bushwalkers are a menace ...'

Amidst a roar from the crowd he corrected it ...

'That Geologists are a menace on bushwalks'

Allan Wright, first speaker for the Affirmative commenced with a verbose quotation from an ancient Kameruka magazine, which at least defined what Geology was all about

"Geology: the science of the earth's crust, a subject in which a short introductory course has been designed for making bushwalkers opinionated and garrulous. The geological formations are catalogued thus: **the primary**, or lower one, consists of rocks, bones of bogged walkers, water board mains and mine shafts. **The secondary** is largely made up of worms and wombats, snakes, the NBC and lost tent pegs. **The tertiary** comprises new highways, power lines, fire trails, pine forests, storage dams, billboards, tins, beer bottles, garbage dumps, bushwalkers and fools."

He stated that geologists were arrogant to call rocks "nice" (gneiss), pointed out that they had upset cherished beliefs of centuries that the earth was flat, and gave some examples of how geologists such as Davies-Fletcher-Scully Mines Limited were spoiling our enjoyment of the natural environment.

Chairman's Comment: Definition good – fallacious statements of geologists.

Gary Scully, first Negative speaker, then presented his 'own biased opinions'. In keeping with the 'unconformity' of the debate, he suggested that not only should geologists be allowed on bushwalks, but that bushwalkers should be 'extruded' from them. He supported his argument with quotes from local geologic rags, and listed the advantages of having geologists on bushwalks e.g. if a bushwalker were to trip over a rock and graze his leg:

1. The geologist could tell what kind of rock it was (round, smooth, hard, soft).
2. He would be the only person who could tell what kind of poisoning the bushwalker got from rock (stone, pebble, sand or mud bruise).
3. He would be the only one who could suggest an effective antidote, such as 3oz. olivine mixed thoroughly with dilute quartz solution.

He pointed out the safety features of having a geologist in the party i.e. he could predict the future

geological history of the area for the next 24 hours or so, and so determine whether or not the area was safe to walk in. The sound of geologists might be noisy (eg the sound of the tapping of their hammers) but the sound of bushwalkers groaning goes on ... and on ...and on ...

Chairman's Comment: He has set up a rock-hard case. Lacks refined pronunciation. Startling facts!

Joan Robinson, the second Affirmative speaker stressed the seriousness of the situation. Geologists wreck your nerves and your peace of mind for fear of tripping over some great rare pieces of rock. Walks become punctuated with stops and starts caused by repeated cries of "Look at this!" A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

(Joan's talk drew the first applause for the night from the audience, namely from Kim and Joanne, who are in her choir at school!)

Chairman's Comment: Lack of argument.
(Who needs it with the audience on your side?)

Keith Fletcher then presented the "teeth of the argument" for the Negative side. In the interests of historical accuracy, we record it here in full.

"My...most...learned....friend (over there) ...has....stated .. the...case...most ...aptly ... (Yes! most aptly) and .. I...feel...that ... the case...has...been stated .. thoroughly .. and .. bushwalkers,...to... waste .. your ... time ... and ...mine .. geologists ... are ...not ...a...menace."

(With interjections, this took 2 minutes!)

Chairman's Comment: Sympathy vote for sore throat.

Dot Wright, final speaker for the Affirmative said the arguments put forward by the other side did not hold deposited sediments, and, in fact, it was doubtful if they would even hold water. The opposition arguments were attacked in general, though some were acceptable (e.g. "a geologist is handy or **something**" "geologists **are** noisy"). If the leader of the **government** is a geologist, then he is a menace on bushwalks, too. Bushwalks should not be stopped every five inches (that being the length of a geologists hammer) for geologists to examine every nook and cranny for possible mining leases. Consider the damage they do: every time they pull out one whole rock, they make an unholy hole in the landscape.

Chairman's Comment: Good summing up of arguments.



Wendy Davies, the last speaker in the debate reluctantly condescended to speak to those of us who were not geologists.

"We need to observe and appreciate our environment"... and to get down to the bare rock is the truth of the matter. What has more substance than this? No one should have to retrace their steps to observe interesting rocks if everyone were geologists – because they would notice them on the way past.

In summing up the Negative case, Wendy concluded that a geologist is merely an extension of a bushwalker.

Chairman's Comment:

(No Chairman's comment was recorded – he was observed to be asleep.)

Graham Lacey, the Chairman/adjudicator objected to the speakers trying to dazzle him with science, he overruled the statistical result (Affirmative 85, Negative 55) and gave the debate to the Chairman with the remark

'Anyway, I won!'

— anon

Do you remember

Goulburn River

Armed with a map drawn by Elsie Tidey and stiff cardboard to use as plant presses, over 20 Club members in three parties surveyed the Goulburn River area for the Newcastle Flora and Fauna Protection Society.

The idea was to observe animals and habitats and collect plant samples so that it could be determined what unobserved species were there. The ultimate aim was the formation of a possible state or national park in the area between Sandy Hollow and Lee's Pinch.

Spectacular scenery, abundant wildlife, and lots of goats.

Report: Tuglow Caves, 24 – 25 February 1972

[The following report was sourced from handwritten notes in the 1970s Ramblers Walks Log. Ed.]

Intrepid Frogs: Don and Diane, Alf and Paulette, Barbara and Denis

Intrepid Five: Janusz, Mark, John, Graham and Chris Patterson.

We left on Friday night and drove through to Mt Victoria for tea at about 10 o'clock. When we finally left after eating the café bare we ran into small patches of fog through to the top of the Jenolan Gorge, which was one big fog bank. Reached Caves House at about 12 o'clock and finally arrived at Tuglow about 1.30 am. Everybody hit the sack except two mates who shall remain anonymous (won't they Don) because they sat up talking all night in very light drizzle (ever seen the sun rise through rain clouds?).

Well, the plan was that some of the new blokes would walk in (19 minutes down hill) minus their packs which would be taken in to the campsite alongside the Caves in the Landrovers. But unfortunately our plans didn't work out as the creek we had to cross was three feet deep and running 100 mph, so we decide to drive back up that bloody great rain soaked mountain, to where we camped last night and throw all the caving gear into one pack and follow the Intrepid five down the ridge. On the way down we ran into two of them coming back who informed us that the other three were walking back along the road.

Boy, we were now spread out over an area of about two miles radius. Anyway we finally re-grouped at the caves (after one of us fell into the creek on the way) and went below. After a short battle between three of us who had been before as to which way we should go, we decided straight down! By this time some of us had become slightly frozen sitting at the top of the ladder so we decided to go topside to look for the other nine starters.

We managed to find two other starters and one possible goer. Around 4 o'clock those topside decided to head back to camp and start tea. We left a note on one of the boy's yellow parkers with a bit of charcoal we found in an old fireplace (very ingenious!). Meanwhile, back at the ranch, so to speak, the gang were having a ball of a time in the

River Cave. They said they found a way around the



waterfall that I nearly walked over last time. Be good to see their slides. They finally took notice of the pangs of hunger and came tripping into camp around 7 o'clock.

That night was spent with the usual merriment and gaiety. The more adventurous of the group thought they would tackle the creek in the morning on their Lilos. They gave that idea up when it was still overcast and looking like rain the next morning.

So Mark, John, Graham, Janusz and Chris packed up and headed out to Kanangra walls for a Captain Cook at the local topography, while the rest headed for Jenolan Caves. We did the tourist bit and bought tickets for a 'Conducted Tour of Nature's Underground Wonderland'. Loaded up with cameras, we hopped on the end of the line. Inside the caves the guide ran though the *do's and don'ts* of the caves including **no photographs!** Mumble, mumble.

So for the next 1½ hours we were amused by the comments and stared at by the Guide (who finally gave up and let us ramble along behind).

Leaving Jenolan we headed for Little Hartley and did the grand tour of the old Courthouse Museum. Back in Sydney we wreaked havoc with the traffic and headed home in the rain again. On the whole it was a very good scenic trip.

— Denis Durrant

PS While trying to look at the Three Sisters in the fog on Friday night we were fortunate to see one of the locals ride his Honda Scrambler down the steps at the lookout, and then back up again. Weird! Really!

Do you remember

Ramblers Gorge

Ramblers Gorge is a spectacular 100ft deep canyon in the Paterson River system. It was so named by the members of the first party to travel the length of the river from where it rises on Barrington Tops down to the first settlement.

In this marathon creek-bash, three Ramblers: Neil Jobling, Bill Morgan and Phil Clare encountered many breathtaking waterfalls, cascades and rapids. About half way through their expedition, they found a gorge. The river rushes through a channel round a corner, is caught by a whirlpool, and roars into an icy-cold pool below. From here, it flows for about two miles, guarded on both sides by cliffs rising from the canyon floor to heights of up to about thirty foot. In places, its towering walls close in way up above to less than ten feet apart, much narrower than down at the river.

You need: fitness and agility, waterproofed gear and warm weather. Have a go at it again!

Bluegum Forest

The Bluegum forest in the Blue Mountains is a favourite walk and campsite of many well-remembered weekends. One of the most memorable was when 29 people split up into seven parties, each making its own way in at different times from different directions, meeting at the Bluegum forest over 22 and 23 April 1967.



Gary, the Bushwalker

The sport of bushwalking had he found
And varied interests did abound
Which meant a whole new world to Gary –
A camera, lens, and colour film to carry
To capture rugged landscape or delicate flower
Or a native bird strengthening its bower.
Soon came the study and collection of rocks
Weathered and moulded over several epochs;
Geology and fossils thus ranked supreme
To remain ever high in Gary's esteem.

When he had mastered the art of navigation,
By taking into account magnetic declination,
One of the Club's foremost leaders he became
And used this talent for the orienteering game.
His long legs raced round many a course
Combining with skill – his most valuable resource,
Which also helped his climbing technique
With physical fitness kept at its peak
For many long river trips that went
On air-beds bought with money well spent.

Caving in due course won its place
Despite the mud from foot to face
Because of beautiful formations found
In each new cave system underground.
Aboriginal artefacts were also seen
The study of which made Gary keen
To visit rock shelters of native art
Where paintings were preserved in whole or part.
Rare Australian made him more aware
Of the need for conservation and wildlife care.

Bushwalking was thus to Gary a call
And shared by the Ramblers one and all.
The happy times we'll remember dear
Both now and through each coming year.

— Dot Wright

Ramblers Reunion 1983

At each Reunion since 1967 Wayne Devonshire kept a record of those participating and created some beautiful artwork showing the scene of the camp. Wayne's record of the 1983 reunion at Polblue is reproduced below.



Elaine Bell
 Sharon Collier
 David Baul
 Stephen Wilcock
 Ross Schumaker
 Gordon Wilson
 ANT. VAN DER VLIET.
 Doug Yates
 Kent Moran
 Melissa Wilson
 Wendy Brown
 Roger Bradley
 Allen Wright
 Dot Wright
 Neil Wright

Wayne Devonshire
 Janette Devonshire
 Valerie Devonshire
 Janusz Haschek
 Joan Robinson
 Sam Hobbs.
 Ian Wright
 Susan Haschek.
 Helen Pattison
 Chris Patten
 Val Hobbs
 Michael Williams
 Als Spoelma
 Steve Spoelma
 Wini
 Patricia
 Ashly

Chris Collier
 Marilyn Maddocks
 Clive Maddocks
 Belinda Maddocks
 Andrew Maddocks
 Steve Johns
 JoAnn Hobbs
 Jenny Brown
 Glenn Grantham
 Wayne Hobbs
 Brad Wood
 BARRY COLLIER
 1983

Ramblers Reunion, 1988 Polblue, Barrington Tops 23-25 September 1988

In order of arrival: Hubert Gross, Doug Herd, Jenny Whyte, Joan Robinson, Judy Woods, Trevor Jefferson, Angela Longworth, Janusz and Susan Haschek with Amanda, Thomas, Alexandra & Christa, Sam and Val Hobbs with Wayne, Matthew Durrant, Glen Grantham, Wayne Devonshire with Darlene, Steve Fabris, Bob Clifton with Phillip and friends, Barry and Elaine Collier with Sharon & Christopher, Helen and Chris Patterson with Matthew & Nicholas.

Polblue Swamp nestles among the hills of the Barrington Plateau, sometimes shrouded in mists, where only the gentle sounds of dripping leaves break the silence. In bright sunlight other life lights the scene: kangaroos, wallabies, birds, brumbies grazing in the distance; the odd trout daring to splash in the narrow winding Polblue Creek which winds its way through the golden brown grasses of the sometimes wind-swept swamp. There is a large picnic area on the northern side and an equally large camping area on the southern side. Every aspect looks over the swamp and in the background a picnic shelter with its eastern side closed in around a large fire place allows an interrupted view of the mystical Polblue. It is a very special place.

Of course, every Reunion is the best ever and 1988 was no exception. Hubert and Doug had a good fire going by the time Jenny and I arrived on Friday afternoon. We had counted 19 kangaroos and wallabies until we saw the mob grazing at Polblue. Judy arrived, then Angela and Trevor. We were to have a wonderful fine weekend. On Saturday, Janusz, Susan and family arrived early.

Hubert, Doug, Jenny, Judy, Janusz, Amanda, Tom and I climbed into Hubert's Landrover and set off for a day walk of about 20 kilometres. We parked at 535607 on the Moonan Brook Map 1:25,000 before the locked gate. We walked on the Old Barrington Trail to Little Murray Camping Area on the Little Murray Creek then turned east on the Kholwha Trail and after 150 metres, south onto the Water Gauge Trail and crossed Beehan Beehan Plain. Now on the Barrington Map 1:25,000 we turned roughly at 553572 on the track to the Junction Pools, crossed Brumlow Creek and Brumlow Swamp, then left the track at 533558 and bush-bashed about a kilometre to Junction Pools. We lunched and lazed at Junction Pools and then followed the Barrington River downstream past the Broom and through the swamp

to Bob's Crossing. Here we picked up the water gauge trail north back to the vehicle. The walk had taken us through the changing scenery of shrubby bush to the vast golden brown of the swamp lands and then to the rocky scenery of the Junction Pools, strewn with masses of huge boulders.



Back at Polblue, tents and people were everywhere and the evening meal was the focus of activity. Then came the grand gathering in the picnic shelter and the bushwalkers' entertainment. The ancient Ramblers songbook was carefully shared around. Glen provided some recorder accompaniment and we admired the beautiful stringed instrument that he'd made. Bob led us all into song with his guitar accompaniment and added to the evening's entertainment with some beautiful solo items. As happened, supper and song saw a few stalwarts last the longer distance and I for one was lulled to sleep by the distant sounds of music.

Nearly everyone followed the walking trail around Polblue at sometime during the weekend. On Sunday morning Barry, Doug and Janusz disappeared to search for orchids. Bob gathered a large group and went off on a bushwalk, while Barry also went exploring in his new 4WD. Wayne and Matthew were unlucky and missed out on the walks (you've got to be quick) and watched the rest of us join in various 'catching up on the news' activities.

The walking groups returned to regale their adventures. After lunch tents gradually disappeared, the chatter of farewells subsided, the solitary drone of each departing vehicle faded. Once more the beautiful, mystical silence of Polblue was complete. As for us, we were driving home with delightful memories of a great weekend.

— Joan Robinson

The Blue Gum Forest and Grand Canyon

Champagne Bushwalking with a Tourist Flavour 15 – 27 September 1989

Bob Clifton



The walkers were David Morrison, Hubert Cross, Joe and Ruth Mannweiler, Sam Mansfield, Jim Doran, Eddy Schultz, Jane Schultz, Peter Reid, Ray Williams, Stewart Clements and Tony. The leader was Bob Clifton.

We arrived at Perrys Lookdown rest area about 8.30pm, the trip from Newcastle having taken about three hours and included a good feed at Katoomba. Trees in the camping area provided protection from the gusty nor-wester and a good fire warmed a pretty happy group for the next hour or so. A full moon lit the sky and a short walk to take in the night views of the Grose Valley was worthwhile.

At about 11.00pm from out of the shadows, emerged 20 or so very noisy scouts. They had walked down from Blackheath and set about organising camp. We hit the sack and tried to ignore them.

Early Saturday we drove to Govetts Leap and parked the cars near the Ranger's headquarters. The cliff line walk from Govetts to Evans Lookout, in the clear morning air was superb – the scenery really is on a massive scale with sheer 300 metre golden cliffs falling into the Grose Valley and stretching away to the north and east. A short walk back along the Evans Lookout road brought us to the start of the Neats Glen track which leads on down into the Grand Canyon.

Both the Glen and the Canyon are narrow gorges full of interesting rock formations and shady green vegetation. At one point Greaves Creek runs some 20 metres below the track in a narrow canyon. Finally the Grand Canyon opens out to reveal magnificent views across the valley and the track drops down to Beauchamps Falls. Not far from the bottom of the falls we paused for lunch. The continual downhill steps were taking their toll on the wonky knees of several of the crew.

Lunch taken, we followed the track along Govetts Creek through open forest to Junction Rock. After a

short rest and everybody had caught up we shouldered packs again and continued walking for about 50 minutes before locating a suitable campsite not too far from Acacia Flats. I did not want to end up with scouts again who had intended camping at Acacia Flats. After setting up camp, most strolled on down to enjoy the Blue Gum Forest in the quiet of the afternoon. The serenity of these majestic trees lit by the setting sun was truly overpowering. That night under a clear sky we enjoyed a pleasant campfire.

The next day was another beauty. We did not break camp until after 10.00am, with some of us returning to the Forest for another look. The return walk took us back past Junction Rock and then up Govetts Leap Brook through beautiful creek scenery and lush vegetation to the base of Govetts Leap Falls and a rather cool lunch. Clouds had taken over the sky and with the draft from the falls it was a bit chilly. We soon warmed up as we negotiated the spectacular 500 metre cliff face to Govetts Lookout despite the light rain which had commenced. Perfect walking conditions.

Not much more to report other than a drink and bite to eat at the Lochinvar Hotel before tackling the drive home with the radio tuned on the Grand Final. The walk was a good medium walk.

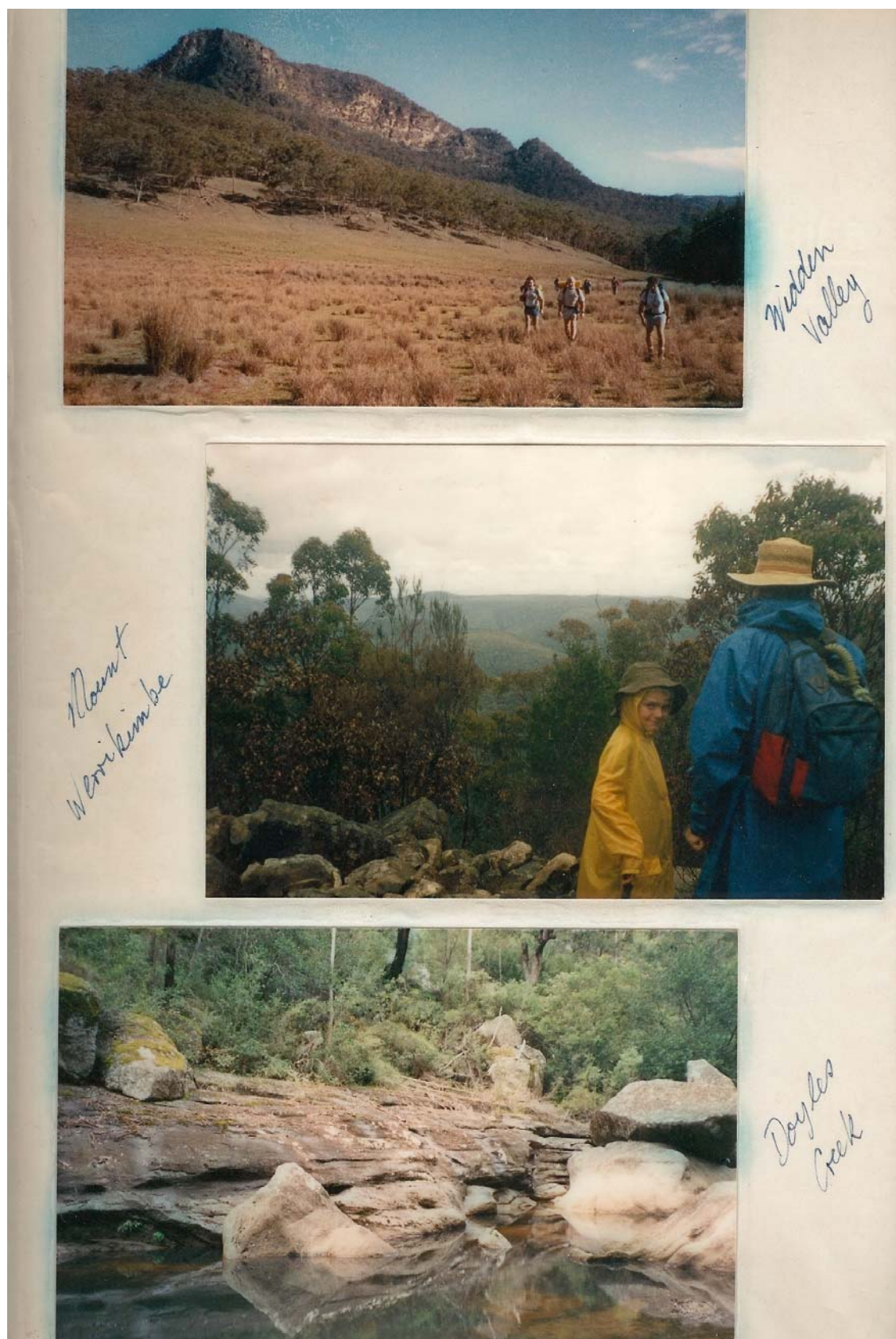
Govetts Leap – Grand Canyon – Blue Gum Forest
17km, 6 hours
Blue Gum Forest – Govetts Leap 8km, 4 hours.
Elevation 700m

— Bob Clifton



The Walks Log

In the 1980s the Club maintained a Log book of the walks and activities that were undertaken. Here is the cover of this very familiar manual that was present at every Club meeting at the time.



The Search for Cessna 210 VH-MDX

At various times members of the Ramblers have been associated with the state Search and Rescue organisation. In October 1988 a team joined a larger S & R effort to try to locate a Cessna aircraft that disappeared with five people on board over the Barrington Forest on 9th August 1981.

Background

At 7.39pm on 9th August 1981 radio contact was lost with a light plane – a Cessna type 210, call sign VH-MDX. It was en route from Coolangatta to Bankstown Airport and following an inland flight corridor that took it over Barrington Tops rather than along the safer coastal corridor. Wind was gusting up to 100kph and about 30cm of rain had fallen. The plane reported a number of engine and navigational problems just before it disappeared.

Radar plotting, just before 7.39 pm and subsequent investigation, including extensive land searches, have narrowed considerably the possible search areas. Search and Rescue assisted in the initial search and two subsequent searches in 1982 and 1983. In all S&R have contributed around 4,000 man hours and searched over 30 square kilometres for the aircraft. S&R sought wider help to solve the riddle. The challenge was to close the books on the matter that had long resisted closure – where was VH-MDX? – and they asked for the assistance of about 50 fit walkers. The Ramblers responded with eight members to be a part of the search for the aircraft.

This is their report.

Searchers Joe and Chris Mannweiler, Greg Shepherd, Rhonda Freeman, Ingrid Waeger and George, Shane Reed and Ross Schuemaker.

We set up camp along the road from the old saw mill on the Allyn River on Friday night. Our instructions were to be ready for the 7.00am briefing the following morning. The scene in the morning consisted of 60 pairs of gaiters and gardening gloves adorning various bushwalkers and volunteers, listening to Bob Cavill and the Search and Rescue co-ordinator.

We were working on the theory of Mr Fred Andrieson, a retired police superintendent. After extensive research and listening to a recording of the pilot's final conversations with Bankstown tower, he believed the aircraft was in a triangular area centred on the old logging camp. With the aid of an enlarged map, Fred explained the final moments leading up to

the plane's disappearance. At approximately 7.15pm, somewhere north of Taree, VH-MDX reported



Cessna type 210

malfunctioning instruments and was off course. The plane was tracked by radar to be over Moonan Brook at 7.30pm. The pilot was instructed by the tower to head south-east to get back on the original course. The pilot reported severe electrical storms, increasingly high winds and extensive turbulence. To make matters worse he also mentioned a cabin fire. At 7.37pm the plane was believed to be somewhere in the search area. In the next few minutes the aircraft hardly appeared to move on the radar screen and the pilot mentioned 'being thrown around like a cork in the ocean'. Just before 7.39pm all contact was lost with Cessna VH-MDX.

Some weeks after the disappearance, a group of loggers reported smelling a terrible odour like decaying human flesh around the logging camp, which happened to be in the centre of the search area. This was where we would be searching. To add to the difficulty, the plane we were looking for was painted green in colour.

We were ferried by buses up to various points along the Paterson Forest Road and then in nine groups searched on a compass bearing due west down into Narara Gully, a descent of almost 1,000 feet. Then it was back along a very old logging trail to the waiting buses for lunch at the intersection of Paterson Forest Road and Shellbrook Forest Road. No rest for the wicked.

After lunch we were taken back up the road to the Gravel Pit and searched due west once more down into the gully and back up to our transport. We realised the need for the gaiters and gardening gloves, as the bush in this area consisted mainly of rainforest woven with loya vines and wild blackberries. Our course was dictated by the compass, the prevailing vegetation and listening for our buddies on the left

and the right. Once the creek in Narara Gully was reached we discovered a beautiful stream with many small waterfalls and nice clear pools. We were confident in the knowledge that not many people had even been in this 'neck of the woods'.

Back at camp that night we were treated to a spectacular downpour that lasted about ½ an hour. It was enough to send a few of us to Joe's Kombi for a couple of hands of Euchre. No campfire tonight!

Sunday morning dawned clear and bright. This time we searched in the northern half of the triangle, with 60 bushwalkers in groups spread out along the Paterson Forest road at five metre intervals all following a compass bearing – west. When all the groups were in position the instruction to proceed was given by radio. We literally dived into the dense undergrowth like a giant human comb.

All the time we could hear the sound of a helicopter overhead which was Allan Clark of Apollo Freshwater Fisheries, who had volunteered his services to help out the Search and Rescue group whenever possible. A fine gesture indeed. Later in the day he commented on the shifting wind conditions and mentioned how he was flying up a gully at full throttle which would normally result in a ground speed of 120 kph. Had the conditions and turbulence been like those on that fateful night on 9th August 1981?

We enjoyed a well earned rest and morning tea by the creek in Narara Gully, and it was back up the mountain to the road for lunch. This time our trusty buses could not be in two places at once, so the Ramblers walked down the road to the radio base for a de-briefing and a 'thank you' from the organisers. Greg agreed to stay and act as a radio relay person up on top of the mountain, because the signals from the group in the gully could not be heard up and over the ridge and down the other side back to base. Many thanks to him for remaining behind a bit longer while we signed off and broke camp, then headed to Paterson for 'one of those milkshakes'.

All in all it was a great weekend. I think all those who attended gained valuable experience in the use of the radios and how an organised search is conducted. I'm sure our services were much appreciated by the Search and Rescue people.

— Ross Schuemaker

[Cessna VH-MDX has not yet been recovered. Ed.]

Patonga

There's a nice little walk down near Patonga on the Central Coast. You have to cross the river to get to the other side.

Joan R has never been there but she knows a fair bit about it, just ask her ... 'it's only ankle deep' ...

Anthony found out that that is so only at low tide, if you're lucky, and that was when he was walking on his hands! 🤪

— Anon



Mt Koscuiko Round Trip via Blue Lakes and Charlots Pass 11 February 1989

Distance: 24km

[This article by Sandra Waeger then aged 9 years, is faithfully transcribed from the original hand written report. Ed.]

We left our cars at Charlots Pass where we commenced our walk to Koscuiko. We went down a steep paved road. At the end of this paved road we crossed the Snowy River, after this we found George had gone on ahead and was doing his exercises.

Then we went up a dirt road, some of the group went on ahead and found a bubbling brook of fresh water (snow). We also found a lovely spot for morning tea overlooking Blue Lake. Blue Lake was formed by a glacier in the Ice Age. There were other lakes formed in this way.

After walking for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour we stoped and walked down, through a field of wild flowers, to see Victoria in the distance, but we couldn't see the Murray River. We didn't stop here for long because we were half way to Koscuiko.

I raced ahead of the others so I could get to the summit of Australia first, but I arrived there third.

On top of Koscuiko we had afternoon tea, that was after I climbed to the very top of the mountain.

I told mum that I could see Branxton but, I was looking the wrong way!

After having afternoon tea everyone except me headed down Koscuiko, but I rock climbed down.

We left Joan and Jack behind because they had already been up there a few times before.

When we reached the junction we found that Jack and Joan had kept walking.

Now after a quick spell, we headed to Seamen's Hut which was a long walk but easy.

We found plenty of fresh cool water. We made it to Seamen's Hut in less than an hour. There was a plaque on it . Which said:

"In memory of Seamen who was perished by coldness while on a journey with a friend."

After having a short spell at Seaman's Hut, we had a quick look inside the Hut, before setting off to the Snowy River. We reached the Snowy River where, I had a film case ready to fill. After filling the film case I found I had caught a tiny fish, so I

let it out and refilled the film case. Then I had a quick drink of water. We had a long walk home from there.



After an hour we saw the cars. I raced on to them and collapsed near Joan and Jack, but we all wanted to know why they hadn't waited for us. They told us that the flies were driving them crazy.

We were glad to get the weight off our feet. I was very happy because I had a bandage on my right foot because an ant bit me on my ankle and it had swollen.

That evening we talked about the events of the day. Mum and I played several games of Chinese Checkers. After hearing about the events of the day, we talked about the events on Sunday and Monday. On this walk I picked up several different rocks.

— Sandra Waeger

Climbing Mount Royal 29 July 1990

The leader was Hubert Cross.

Crossing the fine arched bridge at Singleton, our mixed bag of six vehicles and sixteen people turn right almost immediately into the road to Lake Saint Clair.

The Lake comes up like a jewel, scintillating in its setting of rolling slopes. With the sun glinting over the hills on the far side, the valleys and channels are finely detailed in the shadowy light. What a scene!

‘Who could pass by a sight so splendid in its majesty?’ (Who said that?) You’ve guessed it, me! — but our Philistines swept onwards leaving Louise and myself hesitating and sorely tempted to stop. We did, of course, swing out our cameras for a quick and very hurried shot, fearing that the others might fail to wait for us. Well, with some very skilful driving Louise finally managed to rejoin the tail end of the convoy and follow on into Cassels Road. Reaching the fork with Youngs Road, the vehicles are stashed to await our return.

Then begins the footslogging up the seemingly endless slopes of Cassels, a Right Royal Ascent indeed. Many puffs later Hubert calls a halt on a relatively flat stretch – the last we are to experience all day. To the right a faint track climbs away into scrub and with warnings about barbed wire we launch off on the real thing.

Finally we reached the knife edged jagged ridge along which we are to teeter, rising and descending, seeking precarious finger grips and footholds. We guard against looking down either side to the green depths below, save for just a quick glance, lest they hypnotise us and shake our balance.

This is where that often described, and disbelieved biological phenomenon occurs, but you’ll believe it **here** when your heart really does jump up into your mouth! Each time we think we have reached a pinnacle, more hills keep rising up in front. So it was carry on folks, you’re on your own up here – there’s no way out but forward. Then the forward scouts, Tony, Cassandra, Rolf and Chris run into some impenetrable scrub on top of a rise. Tony leads them off to the right. The rest of us consider this somewhat chancy and settle down to wait the Leader, such is faith (or hope). Our hopes **are** realised as he leads us into a tunnel to the left, avoiding the heavy scrub above. We clamber carefully down over moss covered rocks into a rain forest jungle, an amazing change of scenery.

Mt Royal is a geological surprise packet. After the cool jungle of rotting mossed branches covered with green shrouds of long fern, we finally emerged into a forest of trees, and then on to a surprisingly open area of tussocky grasses, completely devoid of



trees – not one. Quite a botanical puzzle. Later we crossed into another of these patched tussocky grasses with random pools of snow. Lunch is called at a point of lookdown into the valleys. It is twenty minutes to one. We had left the cars at twenty to ten (or thereabouts). H and D survey the surrounding mountains, picking out their familiar fishing hides, and name off the ridges and peaks for our interest – nearest ridge, the Paterson, with its Mount Carabolla, then the Allan, with its Mt Allan, Mt Leumeah, Mt Gunama, then the Williams, with Mt Barrington, the Corker and the crowning glory, snow covered Carey’s Peak – a mere pimple visible only to the keenest sight.

Was the struggle really worth it? Here! Here! is your resounding answer – but shy Tony still refuses to yodel it out for us, although we’re sure he could. At 1.15pm Hubert calls for an end to dreaming. We continue on southwards along the ridge, not retracing the previous route (great relief). The trials and difficulties of the ascent are almost forgotten in the pleasure of the superb mountain magnificence.

Then a long, long trapease through rock strewn grasslands down, down, down the one thousand, one hundred and eighty five metres. Did we really climb that much? Yes, Yes, Yes! And what if we had tackled it by this route?

So it’s down, down, down, until at last the bag of vans, a utility, an armoured 4WD, and a couple of sedans comes into view in the corner off Youngs Road. We’re there! We rejoice that the day has been so kind in its clear skies, sunshine, just a bit of coolness, mild indeed for this Mountain – and perfect for a day’s walk – er climb, in the Mt Royal Range of the Barringtons.

Sixteen exulted people go home well satisfied.

— Athel Molesworth



Timor Caves **17 and 18 November 1990**

Joan Robinson



On Friday night Hubert, Joan, Helen, Jenny and Pat arrived and set up camp.

A vehicle tearing along. Round the bend. High beam on. Straight for the camp fire. Ingrid and Sandra have arrived!

On Saturday Joe and Ruth, Rolf and Carol, Terry and children, Tony, Don, Sue and children, Peter and Liz and children joined the party.

Everyone wanted a Timor Caves trip but no one wanted to lead. Joe explained to me he becomes disoriented in caves. I prepared myself to become the designated leader.

After years of experience I become so stiff in the knees it becomes hilarious and the once glorious, exciting thrill of crawling into unknown places to marvel at the beauty under the ground is no more!

Unexpectedly Tony brought Don who knows Timor Caves so well. Thanks Tony! So the cavers went caving and the walkers enjoyed exploring the surrounding countryside. It is always interesting to meet George Reay, the owner, and hear his interesting tales.

By Sunday lunch the cavers were now looking the part, helmets, torches and clothes all muddy as they lined up with grins of satisfaction to record the fact. During the weekend the children told me they had lost Joe in a cave and I, who could have gone searching too, didn't believe them! But all's well.

Sunday afternoon we left as we were ready. The cavers are looking to broaden their experience elsewhere and the walkers are looking forward to returning to Timor to do some more extensive walking.

— **Joan Robinson**

The Budawangs **5 to 8 June 1992**

Arthur Radford



The walkers were Arthur, Terry, Mel and Zane

It had been ten years since I had approached the southern entrance to the Budawangs. Knowing we had a 6 hour drive in front of us, we decided to take the Friday before the long week-end to drive down. Turning off the highway at Milton on the south coast it's about one hour on dirt before we arrived at Yadboro flat and camped beside the upper reaches of the Clyde river. On the way in we skirted the foothills of Pigeonhouse Mountain and watched the ever increasing bulk of the Castle rise through the trees like some medieval fortress invitingly showing its seemingly impenetrable defences. Cool days had promised a cold night and we weren't disappointed. An ominous fog crept across the paddock before the sun had a chance to set.

The days are short at this time of year so we crept off to bed early in anticipation of an early start the next day. Saturday morning saw us breakfasted before the sun had a chance to rise over the hill. The ground was covered with a heavy frost – so heavy that 8 hours later when Zane took out his tent and shook it, a shower of snow floated down.

By 8.20am we had driven to long gully and, with packs up, crossed Yadboro creek on a conveniently placed if somewhat rickety log. Then we had an hours climb of gradually increasing grade until we reached the first cliff line. The view south was an impressive 180° of uninhabited forests. For me this was a new track up, running east of Kalianna ridge. Happily we left our big packs planted safely in the scrub and headed east with daypacks on and a new spring in our steps. We went up and down under the cliff as the track demanded and around great hunks of mountain rock seemingly pushed in the past from above.

One such enormous chunk of conglomerate about one hundred metres long lies up against the cliff itself and forms behind it what is known as the cathedral cave. What an impressive sight it is! We crawled through a small tunnel which opened out to a large triangular cavern, with ten metre high tree ferns filtering the

light penetrating the far entrance. Out came the cameras and they were to stay close at hand for the rest of this trip. Unfortunately we had to drag ourselves away, we had a mountain to climb before lunch.

Quite a number of open wind-eroded caves or overhangs were passed on our way along the cliff line, this type of weathering known as 'tafoni' results in an amazing range of simple and ornate holes culminating in a small natural arch at Castle Gap. This is only 100 metres across between cliffs on two great mountains – the Castle and Byungee Walls.

We quickly crossed and found ourselves in the hot sun on the northern side of Byungee Walls. Approximately 3km long and 0.5km wide, this fortress was for many years reported to be accessible only by rock climbers. Once we found the way up it proved to be a relatively quick scramble up a rocky chute, with the only difficulty being a boulder halfway up effectively blocking the way. This was surmounted by climbing up a conveniently placed tree.

On top there are views of massive mountains dominating U-shaped valleys in three directions: Tallaterang to the north, Pigeonhouse, and the sea eastwards. We looked across at the Castle and the Shrouded Gods to the west and recognised that these monoliths are mountains upon mountains. We enjoyed a well earned lunch break but as Zane lamented, there was no time for a siesta.

We back-tracked until we reached our packs. As we were below the first cliff line we had to follow this cliff across the southern face of the mountain and around the western side before getting past where a creek came down from above. The going was very demanding to begin with as few others had been this way. But at the top of the Kalianna ridge it became a veritable bush highway badly eroded by the passing of many feet over the years. This track remains scrubby and you constantly go up and down around obstacles.

One thing we noticed on this trip was little bits of blue scattered along the tracks presumably torn off carry mats by the vegetation as walkers passed by.

We didn't quite make our objective that night due in part to the descending darkness but also the lack of energy of the walkers. They were quite a number of other groups on this track, we shared an overhang cave with members of the Span Bushwalking Club



The Cathedral cave of Sydney. A group of Rovers came in after dark and took up residence in a nearby cave and seemed to enjoy themselves late into the night.



Castle gap
One worrying event took place that night and that was several school teachers and thirteen students who passed through at about 9.00pm. They hadn't been that way before and asked directions to a suitable campsite. We wondered at their disregard for safety. One false step along that rugged track could result in a broken limb at the very least.

Sunday we completed our ascent to the base of the Castle, the last part involving a crawl through the tunnel in the 'tail'. The tail is where the monolith narrows to a series of stacks of rock of decreasing height. In it is a split about one metre wide through which we either pushed or dragged our packs. On the other side we scrambled up Meakins pass, which gets

'hairy' in parts, and arrived on the very top of the Castle. Admiring the tremendous views we headed across dodging the rock pools scattered across the rocky mesa. The logbook which used to be there is now gone so our triumph went unrecorded.

We retraced our footsteps down and found our way to what was to be our camp-site for that night near Cooyoyo creek. Here we had our lunch, pitched our tents and left our packs before heading off, this time to explore the monolith valley.

At this stage we could have gone home happily thinking that this trip would be hard to beat, but the monolith valley is described as "the jewel of the Budawangs". It beats them all. In fact, despite the difficulties in getting there, its popularity has threatened its very existence. Some years ago a ban was placed on the camping in the valley. Surrounded by the monoliths and shaped and weathered with time, it certainly is unique in its breathtaking scenery. As you climb up through Nibelung pass, you suddenly arrive, drop the pack, take out the camera and gaze in amazement wondering which way to point the camera first. That's how it happened to us and was followed by a debate as to whether or not this was the best bushwalking we had ever encountered.

One of the highlights here is the green room, a chasm of rain forest between two rock walls containing trees of sassafras, coachwood and the endangered plumwood (*Eucryphia moorei*), a relic of Australia's cooler and moister past. Although in poor light it was another photo stop.

We stopped again along further to photograph the natural arch and the view from Mt Cole. Again the shortness of the mid winter day was against us and we had to head back to our camp for the night. We shared this area with others but it was the long weekend. A shower of rain at tea time was only a minor inconvenience. Having completed our three main objectives we walked out on Monday, over the saddle at the Castle tail and back down the western side, and from there continued down Kalia ridge. We were at our cars by lunchtime for the drive home.

Perhaps next time we will attack this area from the north or west – both present alternative and closer entrances to the wilderness area.

— Arthur Radford.

Bungonia Caves 1991

Twenty people on a caving expedition, it looked like I was going to be busier than the proverbial 'one armed taxi driver'. The weatherman forecast rain but my better judgement said 'she'll be right'. A Friday night start at 7.00pm and 360 kilometres south down the highway and it rained all the way. 'No worries, it won't last', I remember saying with supreme confidence. Tents up and in bed by 1.00am, full of anticipation for the following day.

I woke to the gentle trickle of water and someone saying that it had rained all night. 'That's not possible' I said, as I sponged up the water on the tent floor.

The Rye family had had a bad night, all their children's bedding and gear was absolutely soaked. It was a sad moment when they decided to pack up and head for home. We said goodbye to some of our keenest cavers.

Spirits slightly dampened, we headed for Grill Cave, at least we would be out of the rain for a while. Grill Cave was a good introduction to caving for the uninitiated and a good adventure for the children.

After an early lunch we headed out for some abseiling practice with Joe's assistance, and then down to Hogans Hole. My long suffering mate, Don, was volunteered to lead the way down but the water was filling a low passageway, forcing a withdrawal. Young Bruce was keen to go down with a sponge and bucket but we had to drag him away. Being a double entrance cave, we came in the other side and were successful in finding a side passage, 'great stuff'.

Back to camp late and Trevor had miraculously lit a fire, thanks to copious amounts of metho, and the rest of the crew were partying on. Down for a much anticipated hot shower, but icy cold water soon dissolved the smiles and a rainy night drove us to bed by nine o'clock. By morning most of us were getting slightly more than moist in the accommodation area, 'unbelievable' I was heard to mutter while wringing out my soggy jeans.

On Sunday, we split into two groups and explored three more caves. The very tight Hollands Hole, the extremely challenging College Cave and we finally took an absolutely drenching descent to the Blowfly.

The unanimous decision to head home earlier had already wisely been taken. Wet tents were struck while I changed a flat tyre, 'why me' I sobbed. A quick tea in the amenities block, with its electric stoves and hot water, sheer luxury. I was having feelings of guilt, well not for long. Home by midnight, it rained all the way, 'I told you it was going to rain', I said in a fit of depression.

On reflection, it was a shame for our bushwalking fraternity who spent a weekend around a muddy campsite, but still remained cheerful. The cavers, strange people that they are, seem to relish getting wet and cold, like 'pigs in mud'.

'One of the wettest weekends on record' gloated the TV weatherman the next day.

So what's new about that, ask any Rambler.

— Tony Winton

Snowy Mountains, from Valentine's Hut to Mt Jagungal 26 February 1993

Impressions of a Walk Not Completed

Jill Clifford

The walkers were David Morrison, Jenny Cant, Mel Marriot and Jill Clifford.



After taking a 'recce' from the heart-festooned dunny door (a million-dollar view of the Snowy with every visit), David led a party of three northwards towards the literally high point of our trek, cross-country, to Mt Jagungal. (KoKh 247985 2061 m). The fourth member, Jenny, being rather indisposed, waved us off from the romantic heart-embellished portal of the isolated Valentine's Hut.

8.20 am start. An idyllic setting here, Valentine Falls (KoKh 226892 1600 m) a day-long trek from Guthega Power Station (a lot of up-hill and a bit of

down-dale), across the shallow, stony tumbling river, up a winding yellow path ... on our way now through a shadowy copse of lovely and tortured Snowgums (*E. pauciflora* var. *alpine*).

Light packs today ... heavy enough for me though along the 3 kms of narrowing rutted cart-track. The first 500 metres brings a convenient rock to view to the south, the wonderful Geehi Valley. Mt Kosciusko is beyond with one long ridge gleaming still with dotted snow. To the north our destination, Mt Jagungal rears sharp-edged and pinnacled (thoughts of Edmund Hillary ... 'we' mountaineers!).

9.20 am. David and Mel take a map reading, deciding to leave Valentine's Fire Trail - they comment on the significant hillocks and saddles, Jill looks at the dramatic contrast between this snowline ridge and the grass expanse below us of undulating tundra and the grouped, rounded granite tors, white monoliths changing shape and shade under the passing clouds and bright sun. We bush-bash down the slopes of resinous native oregano toward the plain and Strawberry Hill.

Pale blue sky, pendulous cloud, consistent sharp penetrating cold winds stepping high in the lunar landscape over matted tussocks, (ankle breakers, I'm thinking!) hard-going on my untrained leg-muscles.



Sink deep into the deceptive bright green sedges which hide the half-sunken streams, into the lime and orange spongy mosses - a strange sensation and not easy walking. You have to avoid the deep mud circular pools which you pause to look at because the water in them is surprisingly crystal clear with strange slime shapes and different things in them. Distance everywhere ... a few wind-torn trees on sloping hillocks which separate the plains and then mountains and sky.

10.50 am. A pause - a concession to the 'chain-dragger' at the rear. A short stop in the lee of a huge

boulder, gives temporary respite from high-country wind. I can hear the unceasing muted roar through the Chux wipers I've wrapped around my ears because Guess-Who-Didn't-Remember-To-Bring-Her-Woolly-Hat? Mel has a sort of Humphrey Bogart white straw with a black bandana and I wonder how he manages to keep it on his head for the entire walk!

An eagle is out there in the glorious endlessness, the isolated expanse, the exhilarating space. We actually say it to one another – 'Isn't it glorious out here!' The eagle is gone before the camera is out of the bag.

Mt K is still in sight - but it's moved a bit! I look back towards the fire trail direction, Strawberry Hill would be on my right side - I should know something about compass positions! I begin to sense that I should be looking for a few specifics other than a glorious overview. Everywhere looks the same.

Could I get back from here on my own? Following the curve of the river's edge I see little fishes in the clear water made golden by the flat stones. The water is **so clear**.

11.00 am. Slow-going for Jill - the men stride ahead but pause at hill crests. It's very easy to wander off course so I begin to position them in the landscape. That time they were by the side of a dead tree on the hill, this time etched in outline between two rocks that form almost an arch. There are differences, there are landmarks and they have vital significance in this capricious high country which can spit out hail in the morning and bathe you in the balm of sun in the same afternoon.

Here on the plains there are masses of different flowers, varied flora more than I'd imagined. We've missed the blaze of yellow Billy Buttons (*Leptorhynchos Squamatus*) but captured the brief and delicate moment and pale shine of orchids, which David records 'on celluloid'. Please refer to any good book of photographs on Alpine Flowers, I reckon you name it, we saw it. Mats of white star-mosses with their vivid red fruits, Swamp Heath (*Epacris Paludosa*), Everlasting Flowers (*Helichrysum Bracteatum*), mauve bells, blues and violet hues at once sturdy and ephemeral - like the country we walk in!

11.25am. We've only come about 4 kms cross country. Terrain fairly rough and unknown, strong headwind combines to make slow progress. Almost at the base of Mt Jagungal – classic shape really.

Little trees at base, smooth mountain meadows, black rocky top and jagged edges - the way a child draws a mountain. Mel and David propose and assess - 3 kms and 1½ hours to the top. I know I won't make it - neither the distance nor the time. And there's the return journey!



David checks out. Have you got enough food? Warm clothes? Make a base camp behind those rocks near the only landmark - an old fence post. Don't wander off! Give us 3 or 4 hours.

People disappear amazingly quickly in this terrain - a few seconds and they are - gone! These groups of rocks are indistinguishable so I tie my Chux wiper to the fence post - a moving target to catch the eye of returning mountaineers!

I feel immediately at the mercy of the elements and must be **resourceful** and busy myself collecting bleached twigs and pieces of whitened wood and dried grasses, putting them into neat piles for fire making - just in case! I turn the scarlet padding of my backpack face-outwards and struggle onto a rock but get blown down by the wind so I prop it in the grass before investigating a tor and deciding I may move in there later for extra protection. So if I had to, I could manage out here. Maybe. If I had to, I think I could remember the way back. I think very hard about the landmarks and the terrain of the return journey - the sequence. I wonder how on earth those two will manage in that wind on the steep slopes ... and I curl up and fall asleep in my sheltered position.

I shouldn't be writing this part of the report because I don't really know whether they climbed Mt Jagungal at all. I certainly didn't see it. But they appeared on a ridge coming from a completely unexpected direction in record time and flopped down at 2.45 pm relieved to find me and rather pleased with themselves, I imagine. Fifty minutes to the top and sixty five minutes back to base camp and me, Jill.

In 'Points of Interest' p 72 Charles Warner states ('Bushwalking in Kosciusko')

'No walker should miss ... climbing Mt Jagungal ... some stony slopes and rugged gullies most readily climbed by way of Jagungal Saddle KoKh 272982'

and I think that's exactly what they did. As I'd anticipated they were nearly blown away, saved only by a cement plinth which propped them into a standing position and a rock cleft which allowed them brief shelter before their return journey. The view is supposedly magnificent but, as David asserts, no view is fully appreciated in gale force conditions!

Our return to Valentine's Fire Trail took half the time with the wind behind us, with known landmarks and the zest of a day well-spent, a round trip of approximately 20 kms. We even had the energy to drag contributions of fallen branches for the hut stove. Jenny had the billy boiling on her portable stove and even had had a visitor, another backpacker during her solitary sojourn. We all headed for the river, warm from a day of sun with enough of a nip to be a refreshing finish to a full day.

For Mel and David it may be 'been there - done that' but I want to climb Mt J next time. There will always be 'a next time' for me in The Snowy High Country. It's extra-special, a last outpost, it has an isolation which is nourishing. Put it on your Hit List but do a few push-ups first ... it helps to be fit!

Acknowledgements and our appreciation to the Kosciusko Huts Association, to whom we are sending a donation and fee.

— Jill Clifford

[We did not actually climb via Jagungal Saddle, but along a line due north from 249964. This was almost scrub-free and easy walking compared to a hundred metres west. Also it is almost a track and avoids some of the worst bogs. Jill waited in the saddle at the end of Strawberry Hill Fire Trail, which was so overgrown as to be invisible, at 244954 — David]

Daywalks – The Endgame

Leading a walk recently I had occasion to reflect on the some of the duties of leaders. One aspect of the style of walk leaders struck me as being quite inconsistent – that of how they encourage their tired walkers at the end of the day to pucker-up and finish the walk as one happy group.

For instance Terry moves around the group encouraging conversation so that walkers do not concentrate on the distance.



Gary Craft swears by the technique of a subtle reminder to laggards that the alternative to an overnight stay in this damp and leach infested place with no tent, no food and no cooking gear is a slightly faster pace. Pubs have also been known to feature in the motivation of walkers, especially after a hot and thirsty walk.

Ethel has a classic finish but it has to be planned. A rather damp day at Rocky Crossing at Barrington saw Ethel take a diversion at the start of the walk into the Guest House to pre-order a Devonshire tea for the group for 3.30pm sharp. It did not seem important at the time but the technique worked fine at the end of the day. And at what time did we arrive at the Guest House? 3.29 pm and that is no exaggeration.

A variation of this technique is one that Joan and David have both adopted. They generated a reputation so that, like Pavlov's dogs, we **know** that the walk will end at a suitable Devonshire tea place – and even if it is closed when we arrive we **know** that we will still gain admittance.

Even this was surpassed one day when Julian surprised us all by unloading a Devonshire tea kit from the boot of his car at the end of a Muogamarra walk. I recall my smart remark to him as he was cutting the scones,

'All we need now is jam and cream.'

I also recall him producing them – to the amazement and delight of the Ramblers.

— Bob Donovan

Life Member Joan Robinson



For the bushwalker, knowledge is gained from people, places, adventures experienced, the terrain, history, flora and fauna and even the weather. For some the experience is limited to a time in their lives. To me it was an addiction from early childhood – my parents were bushwalkers and my father was a born explorer.

For family reasons I had returned to Newcastle in 1967. I was looking for things to do and enrolled in a History of Newcastle course at the WEA. In July the YMCA Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club advertised a bushwalking course. I had bushwalked all my life and loved caving, had backpacked over Cradle Mountain in Tasmania twice, but did I walk fast enough to be in a Club?

The course lasted six weeks and was organised and led by a very enthusiastic group of men. Allan Wright, President taught me the finer points of map reading. Barry Collier taught me one day about how the Yellow Bloodwood grows in the Hawkesbury sandstone regions. Sam Hobbs later accompanied me on the funniest and most interesting trip to Wee Jasper. Ron Shea accompanied me for the last time for 2 kms on my first bush backpack and we found a grinding stone in a hole where the Aborigines had left it! Wayne Devonshire who took me to Timor Caves and Glen Grantham who told me he was 43 and I believed him until I found that he had told everyone that! Bushwalkers humour. I bought a compass and began a collection of one inch to the mile military maps, enjoyed the six weeks and became a Rambler.

Over the next 43 years of my bushwalking life I continued meeting wonderful people, expanding my knowledge and encompassing all the facts of bushwalking. The Ramblers also grew in membership and we all benefited from the talents and knowledge of new members.

I took the Ramblers to Wee Jasper and to Tuglow and Bungonia Caves. We met a man, Ted Ingram, and two Queen Scouts at Timor caves. They took us to the Branca Creek caves but trips there are no longer possible as the land was bought by Kerry Packer as Ellerston Station.

Allen Wright planned orienteering contests for the Ramblers and we also went to the NBC contests and the Paddy Pallin contest in Sydney. Now Allen is with the Newcastle Orienteering Club. I gave up, I had too much exploring to do.

After six years teaching at Swansea High School I transferred to Gateshead High and became involved in training students for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Expedition Section. I organised the best walkers to go on a backpack with the Ramblers and me. They benefited by seeing younger men walk and map read confidently. Some joined and Gordon Wilson was one who later became President.

In 1969 Ray Northey came to the Ramblers as a guest speaker. He had spent many years exploring for Aboriginal art and meticulously recording it. I became very interested but it was a long time before I found something that Ray did not know about.

Ray once led an excursion to Finchley Flat Rocks for the Flora and Fauna Society. The Ramblers went and Wendy Davies, then President and a geologist began us on geological features such as *current bedding* and geology came into our lives. Stephen Wilcock, who later became President, was also a geologist. George Tiernan a geologist of note met me at the Hunter Valley Amateur Geology Association. When George retired he joined the Ramblers and so with Athel Molesworth and Jack Bourke, I was no longer the oldest member.

Janusz Haschek became President and introduced the Ramblers to the Budawang Ranges; he also loved abseiling to gorges in the Blue Mountains.

From early years the Ramblers held an annual slide competition and there have been many excellent photographers. In 1972 -73 with varying accidents we lost three Ramblers. Everyone was too young I thought to comprehend the loss. In memory of Gary, the Scully family donated the Perpetual Trophy for photography.

There is now a wide range of ages in the Club and over 43 years I have progressed from 'old Joan' to 'Joan'. Thus in 50 years the Ramblers have developed into the Club they are today. Each of the members has developed and benefited from the knowledge each one has shared. But the basis was the enthusiasm of the first members in the first ten years. This still surfaces in the welcoming friendship that newcomers always experience and comment on.

— Joan Robinson

Photograph of the Issue

In the 1990s in the days before ‘digital imaging’, when cameras still used film, each Club newsletter featured a Photograph of the Issue. On a full page display a glossy print of some awesome shot was glued into each copy. This innovation introduced **colour** to the magazine. Some of the photos were of local bushwalking scenes and some were from more distant locations.

The use of the internet to transmit the Club Newsletter has meant that colour digital images are commonplace (though they are not necessarily printed) and the real competition for recognition is in the Club’s annual photo competition. So here’s the current take on the Photograph of the Issue: two of the entries from the landscape section of the 2010 Gary Scully Memorial Photo Competition.



Landscape *Dick Smith’s Landing Spot, Balls Pyramid* Roz Kerr



Landscape *Terry Tarn, Tasmania* Fiona Maskell

Abseiling at Mount Alum 27 June 1993

Joe Mannweiler

The abseilers were Joe Mannweiler (Leader) Arthur Radford, Chris Grice, Ruth Mannweiler plus many more.



Our day started as usual with everyone assembling at the Hexham McDonalds car park at 7.30am. When our party was all accounted for we started our journey north to the car park at the base of Mount Alum near Bulahdelah. Here was where the walk to the top began, for almost everyone. Unfortunately, I had to transport the ropes and the rest of the gear to the top car park. **Ooh!!!** One of the members of the team brought along his video camera, so we now have a new innovation in the spirit of bushwalking, the 'Bushwalk Cam'.

Whilst waiting for the rest of the people to join us at the top car park, Sam, the owner of the camera, and I decided to do a 'Full Frontal' episode on Harry Butler in the Wild. On close inspection of the car park we found a feral comb lying in the morning sun. With a little coaxing, it became extremely responsive. After everyone had reached the car park and the equipment was rationed out, we started for the Big Quarry. This is where we set up the ropes. For those who have not been to this area before, the look-out at this point provides a near 360° view of the surrounding countryside. The cliffs range from about four metres to the Big Quarry's 34 metres.

Joe began to give the beginners a talk on the finer points of abseiling, from the equipment used to the correct way to connect everything up. After the talk, Joe, myself and two other experienced people gave them a 'dynamic' presentation on how it all works. After the demonstration, Joe took the beginners to the small cliff to give everyone an introductory descent. From what I saw they all really enjoyed their introduction to the sport. Myself and two others played around on the larger cliff. Here we practised technique and I gave them a lesson in inverted abseiling (feet up and head down). They really took to this form of descending. It is used in caving if the hole is too thin for the normal technique.

Whilst reading the latest Club Magazine, I had read a section that was about the Underwater Rock-Hoppers Club. I would like to nominate one of the people with us to be inducted into this club for his efforts. On one

of his many descents, he attempted this activity. However, he was attached to the rope at the time and ended up sitting in the middle of the pond.

After a relaxed lunch, many of the beginners graduated to the two intermediate cliffs. One introduces free-fall, whilst the other is a larger drop. Two of the younger girls really enjoyed the free-fall, so they played around on this one for the rest of the afternoon. Most of the others remained at the other descent and practised their technique and built up their confidence.



Five or six of the beginners mustered up courage to tackle the big descent. I have never seen so many legs that moved like jelly in my life. Nevertheless, with a little coaxing, some reassurance, and a slight push (just kidding), they all took their first step over the edge. After that it was easy sailing to the bottom. I'm happy to say that every one of these people really enjoyed it; some even came back for more.

Getting closer to home time, the more experienced began to let loose with some moves. Yours truly executed some forward run downs, one of which stopped quite quickly after the rope locked.

We packed up the gear in the shadow of a rainstorm and conducted a head count – no one was lost. We descended to the car park and one adventurous person took the express way down the hill. He missed every tree – shame about the last pot hole. At the car park we had some afternoon tea and left for home.

From the expressions of most of the group, an enjoyable time was had by all. For some a fear was conquered, for some a challenge conquered, and for some the rush of 100% pure adrenalin.

— Chris Mannweiler

Flinders Ranges

The Ramblers have had several expeditions to the ancient Flinders Ranges, and no wonder for they are a magnificent part of Australia. Here are some excerpts from a lengthy report by various participants in the April 1994 trip. The trip leader was Joan Robinson.

Flight over Wilpena Pound

What a wonderful experience after a week of walking through and driving around Wilpena to fly over the top of this amazing place. Accompanied by Bob Cox and Margaret Covi, we left just after 9 o'clock from a small runway just outside the Pound. Our lady pilot had to jump in her dilapidated Moke and clear the horses off the runway before we could take off.



Unfortunately the morning we had booked our flight was rather hazy and overcast, disappointing after some lovely clear mornings earlier in the week. Walking around the area we had become very aware of how dry and dusty the land was, but from the air the drought conditions were even more obvious; just about every creek bed was dry and the paddocks looked yellow and parched. I even saw a few dead kangaroos lying on the ground.

Nothing however could detract from the rugged grandeur of the scenery; the shape of the Pound seen so clearly from the air surrounded by the craggy peaks was quite fascinating. We flew round the outside of the Pound, over the top and down lower into the Pound itself; we had a great view of St Marys Peak and flew over our lovely camping area.

I found it a very exciting experience and well worth the \$50 for the flight.

— Jenny Whyte

Ediowie Gorge

Magnificent mountains! Stupendous sunsets! Gorgeous gorges! A brief steep climb down an embankment brings you suddenly into Ediowie Gorge.

How to get there? Head across the wide exciting expanse of the Wilpena Pound enclosure for one hour. Another hour across country to the outer mountain base limits. Narrow winding track now, bush scrub, mallee-type thickets; unsteady underfoot. Embedded here, half-hidden stones and tricky loose sharp-angled rock shapes – tough on tired toes on our return journey. There's the sign: Ediowie Gorge! And here the Corridor of Time begins, between the high red sides of quartzite.

We step into the contrasting terrain as through an immense portal of smooth matt fiery-amber stone. Our rock passageway forms a cool refuge for birds and walkers alike. We hear the darting high-pitched calls, the rustlers and twitters as we hop, scramble and clamber over the soft-looking cushiony shapes of the mid-river gorge boulders. Dry and bereft of even a trickle of water, the smooth-sided rock walls indicate in patterns and colours the passage of seas and waters that have passed this way thousands and thousands of years before.

We cling and balance on rock clefts to finger-trace engraved circles and lines, the sacred symbols of the Adnyamathanha, a people who have made a more permanent mark than our echoing voices and our thick-soled shoes. At this point of the Gorge, in rainy seasons, deep pools form and the curious are deterred by a slippery cliff face and dark expanse of water. But, dry now, we half crawl in single file up a narrow ledge to be confronted by the rock staircase of 6 metres leading deeper into the gorge corridor. In less dry seasons, rushing water must cascade and froth over this parapet, swirling and eddying before sweeping in winding curves to the outer reaches of the gorge face some 80 km away.

The less intimidated lower themselves, cautious feet and hands seeking rock holds. Exclamations follow! To the left is a steep rock shaft – a 'chimney' half-filled with sunlight. Look up to the top! A shining silvery Grey Gum marks the earthen limits of our chasm shelter. It glows bright above us ... bright in the other-world heat. Bob rigs up a rope to abseil more cautious souls to lower ground. Anne and Laurie hand down precious possessions – camera bags, binoculars. Explorers fan out to touch the textured walls, examine vegetation and photograph

the now sun-filled chimney. Louise calls “The light’s just right!” Liz perches entranced, in a well-known meditation position, inhaling the spirit of the place – Gorgeous Gorges are her passion – this is a **top spot!** Joan has discovered a steep bank pathway which bypasses the two rock climbs so now we have an alternative exit. Margaret and Pat finger the soft plants. *Eremophila* species – the desert fuchsia, *Dampieras*, *Prostanthera*– mint types, *Amaranthacea*– Pussy tails; soft hairy leaves in drooping bunches¹. After good rains these plants will transform; tissues become lush stems and leaves pointing upwards and outwards. In springtime the Gorge will be full of flowers. We settle back with sandwich boxes open and necks craned to take in the intricacies of sun and shade that our rock time machine displays. Jenny stretches prone in the sun on the sedimentary surfaces, laid down in the sea some 500-1000 million years ago and gazes toward² ‘the weather-worn stumps of mighty ranges once the size of the Himalayas’.

Each gorge we visited on our Flinders trip had its own distinct character. Alligator Gorge, for instance, compared with Ediwie, has a pastoral, sylvan atmosphere. Ediwie has a brooding, powerful, enclosed strength. Ediwie Creek flows out of the north-west end of the Pound and takes its tortuous course through the gorge, where it narrows and plunges down some spectacular falls, amongst them Kanalla and Glenora, further on.

Artists and photographers flock to this area, struggling to capture the ephemeral dawns and poignant sunsets that are an emotional and visual experience. Lens of eye and camera have to adapt in as little as 30 seconds to catch the dramatic shifts and depth of colour on hills and peaks. In the gorges, shafted statements of morning sunlight reiterate in afternoon gold the messages of the powerful light. If the Renaissance painters, great admirers of light and shade, had trekked here, backpacking their easels, they might well have abandoned the Sistine Chapel and the like. Hans Heysen, celebrated artist of the Flinders Ranges, may have found himself pipped at the post, out-painted by centuries!

Whether a devotee of the gorgeous gorges or the bewitching bluffs, one becomes, as Hans Heysen (1926), ‘a victim’ of the unique light and spectacular allure of this mountainous area.

¹ Ann Urban *Wildflowers & Plants of Central of Australia*, Portside Editions 1993

² R & V Moon *The Flinders Ranges: An Adventure Guide* 1991 p15

And when you plan your itinerary, don’t miss out on Ediwie Gorge. Go there. Soon.

— Jill Clifford

St Mary Peak

The walkers were Joan Robinson, Jenny Whyte, Anne Clarke, Jill Clifford, Margaret Covi, Louise Sorensen, Pat Newton, Bob Cox and Laurie Sewell.



The walk started from the Wilpena Pound camping ground at 540m elevation, heading north-west along the eastern side of the range. The first 3 ½ km of the walk is through an undulating section with numerous cypress pines (*Callitris columellaris* and *C. Glauca*), *Casuarina Stricta* and *Muelleriana*, crossing several dry creek beds. A fairly large dry creek bed was crossed and the real climb started through stands of mallee. As the vegetation became more stunted and the climb became steeper, numerous stops were made to look at the views to the north-east but mostly to catch the breath.

We then engaged in some rock hopping across the Tanderra Saddle at about 960m elevation toward St Mary Peak. Near the top we had a traverse westwards along a narrow rock ledge. Then some easy rock climbing with good hand holds and steps saw us at the top at 1170m elevation.

From the top there were outstanding views of the whole of Wilpena Pound, the ABC Range, the Heysen Range and the salt pan of Lake Torrens.

After an hour for lunch and photography we set off on the return journey. At the Tanderra Saddle the party split into two groups: one returning the way we had come and the other through the Pound, via Bannon Gap, Coinda camp, part of the Heysen Trail, past the Wilpena Homestead ruins, the Pound Gap and Wilpena Creek.

The second group arrived back at the camping ground at 6.30pm, just in time for happy hour.

— Laurie Sewell

Bunyeroo and Brachina Gorges

Another lovely sunny day. Anne, Jill, Laurie, Liz and I drove to the Bunyeroo Gorge and Valley. Leaving the cars at the lookout, we walked through the Bunyeroo Gorge which, in contrast to most of the drought-stricken Flinders, was wet in places from a natural spring. After morning tea in the vicinity of some lovely old river red gums near a creek, we joined the Wilcolo Fire Trail. The walk along the trail was very colourful with the red soil of the trail, blue-green native pines (*callitris collumularis*) on either side and the mauve mountain range in the distance.

After a while we turned off the fire trail and followed part of the Heysen Trail until a dry creek bed was reached. After some searching, Laurie found a marker for the geology trail we had been following, and we continued up a small gully until the track gradually wound around a small knoll. Here at the top, we sat in silence amongst the pines and enjoyed the rich colours of the Heysen Range with its bands of orange, brown and mauve.

The track skirted the knoll, the trees thinned out and the picturesque Bunyeroo Valley was in view. As we continued, ridges of limestone running down the knoll opposite were visible, and below, the course of the creek was easy to see by the river red gums. A chance look behind us gave Jill and I a stunning view of a hill dotted with bright green shrubs on yellow grasses, the colours made brilliant by the sun spotlighting the scene through adjacent clouds. After dallying here and waiting for a repeat performance, we reluctantly hurried to catch up with the others and soon found them having lunch in the delightful setting of a creek bed among the majestic gums.

After returning to the cars we drove to Brachina Gorge, arranged a car shuffle and walked for 4-5kms through the Gorge with its towering red walls and



stony creek beds. On the drive back to camp, the last of the sun painted the mountains deep purple, the hills orange pink and the sky deep pink—an unbelievable sight. A stop at Stokes Lookout, a drive in the dark dodging the kangaroos, a sit around the campfire and it was to the sleeping bag to contemplate another wonderful day in the beautiful Flinders Ranges.

— Louise Sorensen

Bush Camaraderie

What is there in this new found group
That makes my heart fly free,
And gives my soul such energy
It allows me to be free?

Is it a sense of wonderment
I feel in every step,
As all around new sights unfold
That gives me such content?

Be it walking bushland tracks and trails
Or climbing gorges steep
There is a spring to every step
That I would always keep.

Others may have known of this,
But it is new to me –
For I have found a source of joy
Called Bush Camaraderie.

— Robyn Rye

Life Member David Morrison



How did you come to join the Ramblers?

In 1983 when I was 30, the WEA ran a bushwalking course. My mother suggested I try it out. We had some lecture nights with a walk the following Sunday. Representatives of the various bushwalking clubs came along and introduced their clubs. Doug Yates, then the president, came along from the Ramblers. After that, I went on a few NPA trips, and also tried the Ramblers. My first walk with the Ramblers was on 1 May 1983 to Gloucester Bucketts.

Had you bushwalked or camped before that?

No. My only experience of camping was on coach trips to Lightning Ridge in 1974 and to Central Australia and Tasmania in 1979 and 1980. I used to play in the bush at Redhead as a child.

Did you backpack from the beginning, or take it up later?

Not being used to camping, it took a while. I did a car camp with NPA in 1983 - I didn't even have a plastic mug! I cannot remember my first trip with the Ramblers, but I think it was to the Snowy Mountains with Joan Robinson in January 1985. We stayed a week at Sawpit Creek and a week at Yarrangobilly. My first backpack was one I led on 7/8 September 1985 to Ten Mile Hollow Creek. It is still one of my favourite places, and I have taken many trips there.

Where have you been with the Ramblers?

New Zealand, Nepal, Egypt, Central Australia, Kakadu, Flinders Ranges and all over the Hunter Valley and NSW. I like travelling with Ramblers because they are willing to walk around to look at things instead of being driven.

Tell me about your gear.

Most of it I bought in my early days and I still use it. It's a bit battered, but it was good quality when I bought it. I have had 2 daypacks in all that time, 1 overnight pack, 2 backpacking tents, and a two man tent I mainly use for car camps although I have used it for some backpacks. My sleeping bag is J&H (now One Planet) from 1984 which has been carted around the world. I got a lighter one from Fairydown in about 2000 for warmer trips.

I'm puzzled why my pack seems the smallest, but is always heavier than everyone else's. Then they drag stuff out that I don't have!!!

What do you enjoy about the Ramblers and bushwalking?

I suppose there are several aspects. There is the sheer enjoyment of being out in the wilderness, enjoying nature. There is the wonderful scenery and magical things that mere mortals never see. There is the exercise and experiences had by scrambling up and over hills, fighting prickly and unpleasant scrub, traipsing across and along sandy river beds, coming across a cave filled with Aboriginal art, and tracing the course of a long-forgotten convict road.

Most of all, though, there is the social side, being out with a bunch of like-minded people, who are independent and able to survive remarkably well in rugged conditions, are invariably helpful and supportive, have a good sense of humour, and are prepared to try almost anything.

You always seem to have a camera with you ...

Well, yes. In 1979, I borrowed my mother's Instamatic for the Central Australia trip. It took some quite good photos. In 1983, I bought a Ricoh Rangefinder for a trip to China. A few years later, I upgraded to a Pentax SLR. That Pentax went with me everywhere until 2005 when I bought a compact digital camera. It was not that I wanted to use digital, but film was hard to find and even harder to get processed. I still prefer slides to digital pictures.

As for subjects, I started off with landscapes, but you can only take so many pictures of tree-covered hills before they all start to look the same. So I have moved on to more arty-style photos - close-ups, unusual textures or lighting, pictures with people in them. Some of my pictures have appealed to the photo comp judges. I actually won the comp the first year I entered.

... and a computer ...

I worked in computers all my life, and still enjoy it. Some of this flowed over into the Ramblers. The first Ramblers program done by computer was in January 1984, printed at work, scanned onto a wax stencil and run off on the wonderful-for-its-time Gestetner machine by Doug Yates. Later we moved to photocopying only.

The hand-drawn Oigal came to an end in October 1988 when I laboriously traced the last one on to a computer screen, and that is who we have to this day. And of course we have many more computer-related jobs now: Yahoo mailing list, website, data projector...

Thinking back on the last 28 years, what memories do you have?

I miss some people who are no longer around - Hubert and Doug, Jeff Fair, the twinkle in Zane McKay's eye, Lucy Brinkman, Ken Beath. I also miss Joan Robinson who doesn't walk much any more, but is a fount of knowledge and wisdom on an amazing number of subjects.

I do enjoy the wonderful company of many, many people who are still around - I cannot list them all as the editor will only allow 700 words!

There are trips I wish I had gone on, and really wonder why I didn't. There are places we used to go, but have not been to for 15-20 years. I have been trying to remember them to put on the program again.

And some funny things that were not funny at the time: the interminable discussions we had about insurance, and the time it took to decide finally to leave the YMCA.

My biggest regret is that I did not start bushwalking earlier.

What next?

So many things to do, so little time!

— David Morrison

The Bushfires, 1994

We had planned the November to February program with care, mindful of the ever present risk of summertime bushfires. How often we have walked in the sandstone country with dry leaves and undergrowth crunching beneath our feet. Some of us have experienced the closeness and danger of a bushfire and we describe our experience with the same awe that others have when they relate their snake stories.

The fires in January raged. We read about them and watched the news on television. We smelled the smoke. The programmed picnic in the Hawkesbury happened with a small group but the hills on the opposite shore were white in the smoke haze. The worst had passed near the F3 expressway and a 008 telephone call gave us the all-clear to drive to Brooklyn for the Hawkesbury River trip. The Brooklyn road was clear again after a clean up of fallen trees and debris. The smoke haze was dense — we spread our maps out to work out our position. Dangar Island was indistinct in the whiteness, but the

iron structure of the railway bridge arose on cue, like an apparition.

Backburning had just been completed at Marlow. They had stopped the fire on the hills above. The fire fighters sat now on a verandah above us. A lady came down with two cases of beer. Marlow was the last little settlement by the Hawkesbury to be backburned. The air was clear at Spencer and we gazed unbelieving. This had been a danger zone in the news. The return trip was clearer and features of ridges, valleys and islands were before us. Peter Rye commented 'This must be a beautiful trip in clear weather.'

Many people rang and spoke to me asking how the farmers were whose properties we had enjoyed walking in. I apologise if I eventually began to sound rude. Property owners, I felt, had more to do than answer city peoples' questions, and their phones were out of order anyway. But I was being questioned still and I rang Roger and Ann Handy at Howes Valley.

They said that the fire brigades had made their property their headquarters. The Salvation Army had a canteen bus there to cook meals and feed the fire-fighters. Singleton stores contributed. When the fire storm came, one tanker was there and their house was saved. Ann spoke about the incredible heat. The farm over in the next valley was totally destroyed, buildings, animals, everything. The Salvation Army supplied them with a caravan, clothes and food.

'The cattle?' I asked. Ann had put them in the bottom paddock and when she finally thought of them, there they were, standing together in the dam. Surprisingly, the bees were still alive, which Roger attributed to the paint used on the boxes. They doused them with water as soon as possible.

The Ramblers' contribution went towards bird seed, dozens of eggs to be cooked and chopped finely for the wrens, teats and milk preparation to feed a swamp wallaby and an eastern grey baby kangaroo. Someone called with a box of fruit and Ann chopped a lot of it for the numbers of Bower Birds which invaded their trees for a while. They were entertaining and Ann was sorry when they moved on.

The bush is regenerating now and perhaps to us in the city it is as though the nightmare never happened. As we go through the bush we are watching and learning with interest of the paths the fires took and the areas which were safe, such as the gullies and creeks.

— David Morrison

Untitled

Here I sit on top of the World
Whilst below the vista unfurls
With flowers of white and buttons of gold
My heart feels at one with mountains so old.

Later I lay in a bowl so green
With all the mountain around to be seen
The wind sings across the grass all around
Whilst shadows of nightfall steal o'er the ground.

Companions in flickering light can be seen
Much talking we do with laughter between
Yet this is just a moment of life
Building memories to last through times of strife.

— Robyn Melmeth 1997

Sometimes things do go wrong ...

On occasions a rather straight forward Walks Report belies the seriousness of the situation. In the Report below one of the Ramblers suffered a broken leg and had to be rescued in difficult circumstances. But there was a humorous side to the story (well 'black humour' perhaps) and the patient has generously contributed a long overdue postscript! Ed.

Kerripit River and Crayfish Creek October 1998

Walkers: Ken Beath, Peter Rye, Robyn Rye (Melmeth), Laurie Sewell, John Foskett and Warwick Faul.

Day 1: A group of six set off along the link trail from near Darby Munroe Hut. At grid ref 592514, we left the trail and headed in a northerly direction to the Kerripit River. This was then followed upstream to a pleasant campsite amongst the beech forest.

Day 2: Leaving our camp set up, we followed the Kerripit downstream and then crossed the ridge to the north-west to Crayfish Creek. After a short exploration, we returned to the Kerripit and followed downstream to lunch. After lunch we returned to our campsite.

Day 3: After breaking camp, we headed south over rough ground towards the link trail. At about 9.15am, Robyn slipped and fell, suffering a cracked fibula (the thinner bone on the outside of the lower leg). Peter performed first aid and Laurie and John walked out to get help with the rest marking trails and clearing an area of scrub in preparation for a helicopter lift out.

The helicopter arrived in late afternoon, but in contrast to our previous fine days, the cloud had rolled in resulting in mist down to the treetops. The helicopter then dropped two paramedics and a crewman (and John) near Wombat Creek, but without food, water, warm clothing or wet weather gear. Fortunately, the weather was fairly mild overnight compared with the sub-zero temperatures possible in October.

Day 4: By dawn, the cloud had lifted, but there was now a strong wind blowing. The helicopter appeared overhead first, and indicated we had been seen. The paramedics party arrived and administered morphine to Robyn to reduce the pain. Robyn was moved to the liftout site, but the liftout was aborted due to the strong wind.

Ramblers and paramedics then moved Robyn to the link trail and waited for the SES. And waited. Eventually they arrived, but only six SES and two ambulance people, and some were already looking tired. Laurie also arrived with chocolate bars. The stretcher carry then commenced with Ramblers providing valuable assistance (carrying the stretcher plus your weekend pack is very character building).

The weather deteriorated, with showers now accompanying the strong wind. Pauses became longer as the trek became of epic proportions. Fortunately, we were assisted by some young bushwalkers who caught up with us. Eventually, we reached the SES 4WD vehicle into which Robyn was transferred. We also gratefully accepted a lift back to the start of the track.

— Ken Beath

Postscript, by Robyn Rye

This accident was a very embarrassing event all around for me. The weekend had been really pleasant and the day started perfectly. The ground was a bit moist but there was nothing to warn me that it may be slippery. Before I knew what was happening I heard a crack and I was on the ground in severe pain.

Unfortunately, I could not have chosen a worse place. We were in a valley with quite a steep climb up to the Link Trail. Most of us had attended search and rescue weekends and remote area first aid courses so after I dragged myself out of the damp onto a drier patch Peter splinted my foot – boot and all. Then the team went into action.



It was decided that Laurie and John should walk out and raise the alarm while the others set up a campsite around me. Peter used his rescue training to clear a helicopter winching/landing area.

Just after we finished dinner we heard a helicopter and soon it was hovering over us. We were unaware at this time that the helicopter had dropped two paramedics, a crewman and John about 10 kms away at the only place they could land. Unfortunately for the rescue party this involved a 2 hour walk at least and then the climb down into the valley and it was nearly dark. They had a collapsible stretcher and a medical backpack with them – but nothing else! No food, no tent, no warm sleeping bags – nothing. Some way down the track, they spent a cold and hungry night huddled under a very thin space blanket.

The night was very misty but I was as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. The next morning I was leaning against my pack having had a warm cup of tea and breakfast, when the rescue team arrived. They complimented the bandaging work and gave me morphine – we offered them breakfast, which they declined. Then I was strapped to a narrow stretcher which is the type used when a patient is winched up to a helicopter. I was **not** looking forward to that at all. Soon the helicopter was overhead and I was carried to the clearing – but just as the winch had started to be lowered we were hit with very strong wind. The helicopter rescue had to be called off and they proceeded with the vehicle extraction.

Now the stretcher had to be dragged up a 45 degree slope through very thick scrub to the Link Trail where SES members were to meet us and start the trek out to the car park and the waiting ambulance. Laurie and John went ahead of the stretcher cutting a trail to assist, but even so, as my arms were free I found myself helping by clinging to trees or walking with my hands through creeks. It was very rough going for us all.

The Link Trail was not open to vehicles due to a violent wind a few weeks before which had brought down a huge number of trees and these criss-crossed the trail. When we finally reached the track the SES had not yet arrived so the bushwalkers went back down to collect their packs. When they returned we were still waiting so we made lunch and this time the rescuers accepted our offers of food and tea (they had not eaten since the day before).

When the SES arrived the temperature had started to drop so I was transferred to a proper stretcher and we started the walk out. It is not easy to carry a stretcher – and very soon I was aware of the discomfort of my rescuers. My fellow bushwalkers were made of stronger stuff and managed to carry most of the trip (with their backpacks on their backs as well). Remember this was over and around many downed trees. It started to rain and sleet halfway into the job and the SES people were obviously suffering from hyperthermia. Near the end of our struggle a group of four (unfortunate) young bushwalkers appeared out of the bush and were roped into helping with the rescue.

By the time we reached the ambulance, the policeman who was in charge of the whole deal told me he thought he would have more patients than just me because of the foul weather and the icy conditions, and in fact some of the rescuers were taken to hospital with suspected hyperthermia.

I was transported to the Gloucester Tops caravan park where a fleet of ambulances were waiting and then had the long and uncomfortable trip to John Hunter Hospital.

Just as a PPS, my mother heard on the radio that a **man** had broken his leg and knew instantly that it was me. Go figure!!

— Robyn Rye

The Gourmet Backpack 2001

Walkers: Peter Rye, Christina Byrne, Robyn Melmeth, Keith and Marie Jones, Fiona Maskell, Bob Donovan, Carol Bastian, Kathie, Ben and Shaun Maloney, Angela Longworth and Bob.

Obviously, this was going to be a serious weekend. Names of participants conjured up images of extended trips to remote areas of Tasmania and rugged areas to the northwest of Newcastle. Would I be able to measure up to the standards that had been set on previous such backpacks?

As with all such events, preparation for the gourmet backpack started days earlier with planning, purchasing and packing. The first day commenced at rather leisurely pace as the 13 of us met at the Crossroads and then continued with certain members of the group finishing their culinary preparation by making last minute purchases!

A stop was made at the Wisemans Ferry shop to regroup and indulge in a variety of food and drinks, and to reinforce the theme some trays of fresh oysters were enjoyed by some of our party. Last minute instructions were given and we made our way to the start of our trip.

Now, the meaning of gourmet backpack started to unfold. I was not the only one who had a rather heavy pack – I thought it was just me who was carrying over the ‘legal limit’, but by the size and number of packs, parcels and sundry bundles, everyone had come well prepared.

We had a pleasant walk in through private properties. At times progress was made a little difficult where the owners had installed locked gates and very narrow gaps for us to squeeze through (packs off, packs on again). Our destination proved to be a wonderful site on a level grassy area (must pack the lawn mower next time), which was just a short walk from a sandy beach on the Colo. Obviously our leader had done his homework, as, not only did we have the use of a sheltered camping area, but toilets as well!

The usual ‘housekeeping’ for setting up a campsite was carried out and then, from the depths of the aforementioned luggage a huge variety of kitchen equipment, food items and décor appeared. Where had those huge cooking pots been hidden? A pasta-making machine (hand powered of course) emerged and fresh fettuccini was rolled out on site. A cake was transformed into a wonderful desert; ingredients

were cut, mixed and prepared in a variety of ways to put the final touches to the evening’s climax.

But, of course, we couldn’t come this distance and prepare this wonderful banquet and be dressed in *bushwalking gear*! No, the order of the day (evening), was formal attire and - when final preparations had been put in place, when the sauces were simmering nicely, when the duck was almost done to perfection, when the fish was steaming in its foil and the entrees laid out ready to be enjoyed – everyone dressed for the evening.



Was this the same group that had walked in just a few short hours earlier? The lovely gowns? The dressy shirts and suits? Those wonderful leopard skin platform shoes? That marvellous hat? The table was laid with a formal tablecloth, glasses raised to drink each others health and the gourmet evening was formally underway! The meal flowed easily from the variety of entrees to a wonderful array of salads, duck, seafood and vegetarian dishes, accompanied by drinks and wonderful company.

Main course was cleared away and we thought we knew what was in store for dessert, after all, we had seen the preparation that afternoon, hadn’t we? But no one was prepared for the final addition – an experiment in ice cream making that had everyone



intrigued for quite sometime while something that resembled the opening scene from Macbeth unravelled itself.

Clouds of vapour arose as cream and fruit interacted with the secret ingredient (dry ice), which had been lurking in the recesses of a backpack. What a spectacular conclusion to the formal dining for the evening!

The evening finished with a walk to the sandy beach down by the river. The day had been warm and several people had expressed an interest in a swim after dinner. However, the temperature and resolve of some walkers had dropped so only the hardy partook of the water that evening; the remainder were content to sit or lie, and talk or sleep beside the river. The misty vapour that had permeated the atmosphere when the icecream making was underway had transferred itself to the water and much entertainment was drawn from this spectre.

A very pleasant evening ended with everyone retiring to their tents. Apparently some participants missed the sounds of the many fruit bats flying overhead for quite some time during the night and, as evidenced the next morning, some tents were missed as target practice by the bats through the night (bats seem to prefer dark green tents with purple trim, so beware).

Next day was started with a relaxed breakfast followed by a pleasant trek up the river.

Most people opted to spend the trek walking in the river and at various times headed back to camp. Only the devoted continued, they were going to catch a nice fish (or two or three) for lunch. The rest relaxed and swam in the river, or sat around the camp site being entertained (terrorised) by the rather large goanna which was intent in checking out our camp to see if we had overlooked any goodies.

All good things must come to an end, so we packed up our many goods and chattels (did anyone's pack seem lighter?) and headed back to civilisation. On our walk out we met some of the property owners – one of whom had been a bushwalker in the Ramblers! We enjoyed a chat with them and then continued out from the beautiful valley where we had spent a wonderful weekend.

Thanks to our leader and to the walkers who made this such a marvellous weekend.

— Christina Byrne.

The Wollemi Pine.

This is story of the Wollemi Pine, a unique plant that is a botanical relic from the age of the dinosaurs.³

But first a note about the Wollemi National Park. It is a wilderness area of over 5,000 square kilometres located north west of Sydney. It is dominated by creeks, rivers, waterfalls, valleys, canyons and gorges, all formed by water erosion and weathering of the underlying sandstone and claystone. There are hundreds of canyons and gorges, many of which are so inaccessible that they have never been visited. It is not surprising that a relic of the botanical past survived here.

September 1994. David Noble, a 29 year old National Parks and Wildlife Field Officer, spent his weekdays building walking trails for disabled tourists in the Blue Mountains and his weekends exploring the wilderness. He's a tall, strong young man, as wiry as a gum tree, and well known as an accomplished bushwalker.

On Saturday, 10th September 1994, he and two companions abseiled into a canyon. After abseiling three drops and swimming twice through freezing water, Noble, who was walking ahead of the others, suddenly stopped.

'I had seen thousands of these gullies' Nobel recollected 'but it looked totally different to the rain forest you normally find'.

Ahead of him, strange big trees were growing. Their bark was bubbled weirdly and reminded him of Coco Pops breakfast cereal. Below the trees were mounds of debris, as if someone had raked the floor of the forest into piles of compost. His eyes moved from the mounds to the trunks and followed their cylindrical shapes skyward until his neck was craned back. One tree, the tallest, later called King Billy, was over 40 metres high. He collected some juvenile foliage and stuffed it into his bag, not realizing the significance of his find.

Some days later Noble took the foliage he had collected to his mentor at work, Wyn Jones. 'What sort of plant did it come from?' asked Jones, 'fern or shrub?' 'It's a bloody big tree' replied Noble.

Jones, 52 years old, was working as NPWS central region senior naturalist. At first he had little idea of

³ Refer to Woodford, James, *The Wollemi Pine*, 2005

what he was looking at, but he was certain it belonged to the group of lower order plants: algae, ferns, cycads or conifers. Because of the fern like leaves, he thought it may have been a giant tree fern. Noble took him to the site and he was fascinated by what he saw. He took samples of more leaves, some of the stunning bubbly bark and some of the pollen cones. It seemed clear that the plant belonged to the ancient *Araucariaceae* family of conifers but this was thought to contain only two genera, *Araucaria* and *Agathis*.

Now they faced a difficulty. The key to identification lay in the female cones and these were at the **very top** of the trees. A helicopter was flown to the canyon and hovered directly over the trees. With King Billy thrashing dangerously around under the helicopter downdraft, Jones grabbed a branch and plucked off a female cone. When he carefully cut the female cone in half he realized that the seeds did not fit the genus *Agathis* or *Araucaria*. This was a new genus.

The Wollemi Pine was formally named genus *Wollemia*, to commemorate the Wollemi wilderness, and the species *Nobilis* in honour of David Noble. The new genus *Wollemia Nobilis* was added to the plant kingdom and now joins *Araucaria* and *Agathis* in the conifer family. As far as we know, Australia is the only country that has all three genera.

In fact the fossilized remains of the *Wollemia* had been found in the 1980s among 140 million year old fossils at Koonwarra in eastern Victoria. It was not named at the time but was known to belong to the *Araucariaceae* family. The discovery of the living *Wollemia* was the equivalent of finding live dinosaurs roaming the earth.

The pollen history of the Wollemi is also very interesting. Mike Machail, a palynologist (a scientist who studies fossilized pollen) heard about this remarkable discovery and asked for samples of the pollen. When he saw the pollen through his microscope he identified it as *Dilwynite*, which was first named in the 1960s and later discovered in sediments under Bass Strait. It has since been found over most of Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica, in sedimentary deposits up to 90 million years old. This establishes that the Wollemi pine was once abundant across our ancient continent until it died out about three million years ago.

Geneticist Rod Peakall now joins the story. He began to study the genetic secrets of the Wollemi pine and was bewildered by what he found. He first compared

the DNA graphs of two different *Wollemia* trees and found them to be genetically identical. He compared



the foliage of King Billy with foliage from 50 seedlings produced by five different ‘mothers’, and all were identical or impossibly perfect clones. This was something that he had never witnessed and was unknown in the scientific literature. All but identical twins and clones have differences in their DNA. However the sexual offspring of identical twins or clones will always be genetically different from their parents.

Peakall’s first thought was that *Wollemia* must have been a single organism. By this time a second stand of Wollemi pines had been found. Samples from both sites were analysed and, incomprehensively, they were also perfect clones.

The prime reason for variability in plants and animals is to establish defense against diseases and parasites. If disease threatens to overwhelm a specie, some individuals in it will usually fight off the disease and survive to procreate. The botanists realized that with no known variability, the Wollemi pines were at great risk of succumbing to disease or parasites. A prudent protection strategy was adopted of propagating the Wollemi pine from seeds and cuttings, and sending the seedlings to all corners of Australia and the world.

After a lot of work to establish that there was no risk of the trees becoming a pest, steps were taken for their propagation and a decision was made to grow and sell the plants commercially. As a result the Wollemi pine, a unique and vital part of the natural heritage of our planet, can now be found in botanical parks and gardens across Australia and around the world. They should be safe for the foreseeable future.

— Robert Gascoigne

Life member: Arthur Radford

Arthur's childhood was on a dairy farm run by his family at a place called Meroo Meadow, near Bomaderry on the south coast of NSW. It was an active life with lots of farm work, ponies to ride, adventures to the Meroo Chasm and exploring the foothills of what is now the Red Rocks Nature Reserve. He recalls that as a youth, he rode over the Cambewarra ranges to Kangaroo Valley (*and that's a mighty steep ride!*) His first brush with camping was through the Scripture Union fellowship with camping on south coast beaches and on farms near Ulladulla.



When he was a teenager the family moved into Berry, and settled a couple of doors down from where his grandparents lived. Gran would enthral him with stories about the 'old family'. He bought a DIY family history manual and ever since has had a compelling interest in family history, old records, and hiking to historical cemeteries in deserted townships.

After high school Arthur gained a cadetship with the BHP steel works and moved Wollongong, where later he met his wife Hazel through their membership of the Methodist Church. Career changes from the steel works to the power industry took the Radfords to the Blue Mountains. They settled in Blackheath and Arthur gained employment at the Wallerawang power station 40 kms west, near Lithgow.

In 1978 Arthur responded to a 10 year high school reunion invitation. He met up again with an old acquaintance, a keen bushwalker, who lived 'just down the road' at Mt Victoria. This led to backpacking in the Kanangra Walls area **and so the die was cast:** an outdoor upbringing, a strong cyclist, and a taste for going on challenging backpacks in pristine bushland! No wonder he's a bushwalker!

There must have been some cold mountain winters in the early 1980s because in 1982 the Radfords decided to move their young family from Blackheath to somewhere warmer. It's our good fortune that they chose Lake Macquarie and Arthur took a position at the Eraring Power station.

How did he become a Rambler? Arthur says he saw an article in the newspaper with a phone number; he saved the article but did nothing! When later he called the contact person he had a long conversation with an interesting person called Joan. By this time they had been in Newcastle a while and he thought he knew of most of the good walks around the Hunter. How wrong, he says, there were many more!

He joined the Ramblers in 1989. Early walks were with Ramblers such as Ken Beath, Bob Clifton, Joan Robinson, David Morrison, Ingrid Waeger and Kate Zimmerman. He has great memories of walks around the Hunter and also to more distant places such as Hinchinbrook Island and the Larapinta Trail.

Arthur says he likes to lead. He likes finding new places, researching how to get there, working out where to go, planning the logistics, possibly doing a recce and then leading the whole trip. Some of his best Walks have been to his old territory of the Budawangs on the South Coast (*see separate article*).

But he admits that there have been a few disasters. He recalls one trip to the Western Arthurs, a beautiful little glacial range with lots of lakes. They set off in bright sunshine but, being southwest Tasmania, the weather changed, there was dense fog, it started to rain and blow and they spent the next two days in the A frame tent holding on to the tent poles for dear life.

Arthur has given back a lot to the Ramblers. He has had multiple terms as Secretary, Vice President and President, been a committee member for many years and a steady contributor to the walks program. He is much respected for his good nature, his humour and the commonsense of his contributions to the Club's business.

Arthur has broken free of the shackles of full time employment and has set off on a Ramblers trip to explore the natural, social and historical environments of Iran. Part of this experience will be trekking the Iranian ranges with the aid of mules and so he may yet draw upon his childhood experiences of riding ponies around the south coast. Hazel will join him after Iran and they will continue their journey to the UK.

— Peter Farley

The Diaries of Jeff Fair, 2002

One of the long-term members of the Ramblers was Jeff Fair who was a discerning advocate of the spirit of bushwalking. He led many walks and kept a diary in which he recorded where he'd been, sketched pictures and kept notes of his experiences along the way. Here's one of his sketches of the old cemetery at Yerranderie, including his notes of the inscription on the headstone.



Jeff also had a penchant for Haiku poetry⁴ and managed to combine these two passions in a most delightful way. In October 2002 he and four Ramblers⁵ went on a lengthy backpack from Katoomba to Mittagong and Jeff prevailed upon them to become Haiku proponents. Each night they would reflect on where they'd been and the impact of their experience and then start condensing their thoughts into the essence of language, for the genius of Haiku

⁴ Haiku is a Japanese literary form: a short poem of a keenly observed moment that relates to nature. The poem has three lines: lines 1, 2 and 3 have 5, 7 and 5 syllables respectively. It is said that Haiku is best written in Japanese for the oral rhythm of the language. Writers wrestling with English are allowed a little more latitude!

⁵ Jeff Fair, Doug Curry, Len Dyall, Lois Simpson and Tim Turner

is in the economy of words to paint a multi-tiered picture, without necessarily telling it all. We have reproduced a few extracts from Jeff's diary of their journey, and their delightful creative endeavours. More images are in the 50th Anniversary Photo Collection.

Along the Kowmung
most delightful of rivers
past glossy black snakes. [L.D.]

lunch by limpid pool
swallows skimming low in flight
broken reflections. [L.S.]

hen doing chemistry
with kitty and camp stove
very fishy. [J.F.]

River gorge narrows
sandy cliffs are smaller now
going hard, but steady. [J.F.]

leaving the cool river
we toil up the steep ridge
in the blazing sun. [L.D.]

A dreary road slog
the birds falling silent
in the noon day heat. [L.D.]

Tall stringy gums
against orange sand stone walls
tranquility [T.T.]

Glowing embers
Thoughts & dreams
drift away with the smoke [J.F.]

The Evolution of Oigal

Where did the funny looking man who appears on every Ramblers Club program come from? Someone must have drawn Him first. Who? Why does he have such a silly name - **Oigal**?



The origins of Oigal, it would seem, have almost become lost in the mists of time. Some years ago the committee discussed having a Club badge made and it was suggested that Oigal should feature prominently on it. At least one person was heard to moan and other suggestions were made, in any case the badge didn't eventuate. Oigal did appear on the 40th Anniversary T-shirts. I think that most of us have grown to like our little friend, after all hasn't he always been the symbol of the Newcastle Ramblers?

Joan Robinson, our first life member, has been in the Club longer than nearly all of us can remember and she enjoys telling the story of where the word Oigal came from. As we know the Club first began as a group of red-blooded young men, mere teenagers in fact. Apparently at some time after being away in the bush for an extended period, on reaching the outskirts of civilisation, one of the group spotted a member of the fairer sex and was heard to exclaim

Hoy! Girl!

Well that is how Joan tells it and it is a plausible explanation, I'm sure. But do I detect a mite of mild scepticism? Surely not! Anyway I am sure as you all can imagine that after such an outburst it wouldn't be long before that call became a catch cry for the Ramblers.

But this doesn't explain why the little short character should become the emblem of the Ramblers. Having recently taken on the job of Club librarian, I have had the opportunity to delve into the archives and it is amazing what you find fascinating. One of the things that I found was early copies of the Club magazines. It is these that give us a clue to the origins of Oigal. While the expression may have been in use in the Club for some time, the first time the word appeared in print is in the first edition of the Club Magazine in 1970, some 10 years after the Club began. The cover is labelled 'Ramblers Bushwalking Club Magazine' in bold type but Oigal in inverted commas in very small print is used to begin the first article explaining

that it is our first launch into the printed page. The second edition in 1971 has the same cover but the word Oigal is in large type in the inner title page. This is followed by a poem of 'The Oigal Bird' that lurks in the forest and appears in a dream – all very mysterious.

In subsequent editions we have a wedge-tailed eagle flying off a mountain as an adjunct to the Oigal heading and this continues through a number of editions. However in the summer of 1972/73 a funny little bearded man first appears. Alan Wright was the editor at the time but I am not sure if it was he who drew him first. A photocopier would not have been available then, so this hand drawn image after being pressed into service and roneoed off using a Gestetner machine, eventually had to be redrawn.

The little mascot went through numerous changes over the years.



Somewhere along the way he seems to have lost most of his torso. It was not until the advent of computers that Oigal became standardised as the figure we all know (and love) today. David

Morrison redrew him at the time.

Checking this out with Barry Collier, who has been a member a bit longer than Joan, he tells me that Oigal was first used as a call sign to identify yourself as a Rambler. Apparently it stems from a combined clubs bushwalk, perhaps a confederation event, a few months before Barry joined. Each club was asked to come up with and use a separate call. The NBC used 'Fish-O' which some of the Ramblers thought was a bit of a joke. 'Cooee' was already taken so one of the Ramblers came up with 'Oigal' as it sounded good and carries well in the bush. Barry tells me that at one time the word Oigal became confused with eagle which explains why it appeared in a couple of early magazines. It appears that Oigal has been around for about 40 years.

When I look at him, now that I'm aware that it is a call, I can see clearly that our club mascot is shouting OIGAL!

But how does he do it with his mouth closed?

— Arthur Radford

Mt Wilson Car Camp and Canyons February 2005

Peter Rye



The Man from Mt Wilson

[This ballad poem honours one of our most respected Leaders who, for some reason, eschews proper boots in favour of 'Dunlop Volleys.' Ed]

There was movement at the Ramblers,
for the word had passed around
that a Trusty leader called Peter had gone away!
He had joined the Mt Wilson canyons,
he was worth his Dunlop Volleys.
So all the Walkers gathered to the fray.

All the tried and noted canyons
from Ramblers near and far
had gathered at Mt Wilson overnight.
For the Walkers loved hard canyoning
where the Leader provides the claret
and the Lilos snuffed the Volleys with delight.

There was Sharples who made his pile
when his Leader discovered Volleys,
a veteran with a pink-as-pink wetsuit,
but few could paddle beside him when his
blood was fairly up.
He could go wherever
wet suit and Lilo could be paddled.

And Robert from the Feds
came down to lend a hand.
No better canyoner ever held a rope
for never log could throw him whilst an abseil rope
would hold.
(He learnt to canyon whilst walking with his Dad.)

And one was there, a new walker
on a small and spongy Lilo
something like a surfplane undersized.
A touch Clark Rubber, (three parts nylon at least)
t'was such as bushwalking raffles prized.
It was hard and tough and colourful, just the sort that
won't say yikes ...
but still so bright and slippery, one would doubt her
power to stay,
so they said 'that Lilo will never do' for a long and
tiring paddle –
You'd better stop away,
besides those Volleys are far too worn for you.

So she waited tired and wistful, only Sharples stood
his friend.

He said, 'I'll warrant she'll be with us when she's
wanted at the end

for both her Lilo and wet suit are by Mountain
Design!'

She hails from Cow Dung River up by Wombat
Wonderland

where the gullies are twice as deep,
and Volley tread strikes firelight from the cask at
every stride
and nowhere yet such hangovers have I seen!

Well they sent the flint stones flying
but the Lilos stayed afloat,
they cleared the sunken timber in their dives,
and the Man from Mt Wilson ne'er scraped upon a
log
it was grand to see that mountain canyoner slide
through the stringy barks and saplings
on the rough uneven ground,
down the canyon at a racing pace he went
and he never paused his Lilo till he landed safe and
sound
at the bottom of that terrible descent.

And then he led them single handed
'til their wet suits were tight and chafing,
he followed like a blood hound with vaseline.
Til they halted, tired and water logged;
Then he turned their Lilos home,
And alone and unassisted brought them out.

But his hardy Coast Camping Lilo
it could scarcely raise a squelch,
it was tattered from the rocks and sandy bottoms.
But the wedding tackle was undaunted
and his courage fiery hot,
for never yet was Rambler Leader a cur ...

[Apologies to Mr Banjo Paterson]

Phew, it's so hard to put into rational words such a
wonderful, adrenalin pumping experience. Thank you
Peter Rye for your infectious enthusiasm and in
gestalting another descent into awesomeness. I can
thoroughly recommend this as a memorable, albeit
challenging, canyoning experience.

— Sandy Hungerford

Pantoneys Crown **8-9 September 2006**

Maps:

Ben Bullen 8931-4S

Cullen Bullen 8931-3N



Lois Simpson

The walkers were Lois Simpson (leader), John Sharples, Peter and Robyn Rye and Lynne Walker.

We were to meet Peter and Robyn at Lithgow for dinner Friday evening, but a mobile message at 7pm reported that Peter and Robyn were on their way back to Sydney for a medical emergency. Perchance, Peter had met up with the NBC and had kindly organised for the three of us to join them on their pipeline walk in the same area if we so desired.⁶

Over dinner it was decided that we would go ahead with the programmed walk so we headed north to Ben Bullen and then roughly east to the camping area just below Baal Bone Gap at 290176. It should be noted here that our advice from the local ranger was that this was the best way to go and that we would need a 4WD vehicle to complete the last 3km of this road. We didn't use 4 wheel drive, but high clearance was essential to negotiate the numerous anti-erosion mounds on the quite steep descents.



Pantoneys Crown in Capertee Valley

On Saturday morning we drove the last 700 metres up to the gap, 292185, and started our walk at about 8am. The pipeline service road from Baal Bone Gap descends to the Crown Creek valley floor but no longer follows the track marked on the maps. The

descent, some 180 metres, is steep and the surface quite loose so slipping and sliding was the order of the day. As we approached the bottom we could see the old road below and some of our navigation dilemmas were explained. The walk along Crown Creek is flat and easy and very picturesque, with unique flora and towering cliffs all around.

The first part of the ascent to Pantoneys Crown is a 100 metre spur at 302225 and then along a relatively flat ridge for about 2km. At this point it gets serious. The next 200 metres are very steep and the ground is loose and covered with lots of dead fall; the last fire here was around 1975, so it's two up and one back all the way to the base of the cliff.

After lunch we proceeded to the northern most tip of Pantoneys, 291246 and located the rather obscure path up through a number of scrambly cracks and a four metre sheer wall with just enough foot and hand



holds to make it negotiable. Once on top you are confronted with the wildest assortment of pagodas you could imagine. Fantastic shapes created from weathered sandstone held together by ribbons of ironstone. Although they are all generally the same, no two are alike. They range in size from a metre or so up to 60 or 70 metres or more. The crown itself is about 1.25km long, 250 metres wide and runs at 43° magnetic. Since we usually find wattle along creek banks, it was unusual to find five or six varieties of the most brilliant wattle on top of Pantoneys. Couple this with views that reached to the end of the world and the effort to get here was suddenly worth it. The excellent camping area is just short of the southern end at 294234.

After a hard day's work, we set up camp at around 4:30pm. During the day there had been intermittent sprinkles of rain and a strong, cold southerly wind. In

⁶ The unavoidable withdrawal of two people left only three participants, which is the minimum for a walk.

the evening, the wind increased to a roar and kept up all night. Thanks to the sheltered position of the campsite, we were out of the wind but the incessant noise made it difficult to sleep.

Sunday morning and we headed south to 282235 and the exit route, which proved harder to find than the way up. Some three hours after breaking camp we were safely at the base of the cliff line and, after a well earned morning tea, on our way down into the saddle at 282230 that leads up to the base of the next cliff at 270220. Here we had lunch at 12:15pm. We spent time admiring the stone, which varied from dark brown coarse conglomerate, through yellow and orange to the finest grained pastel pink. By 1:15pm we had scaled our last major obstacle by way of some conveniently placed logs and a narrow watercourse worn deep into the rock. The next 3 hours were spent bush-bashing through a mixture of various eucalypts and heath, all very scratchy but interspersed with the most brilliant wattle and the odd drumstick. At 289187, a break in the sheer cliff line, we made our way down to Baal Bone Gap and the waiting car.

We all finished the walk tired, a bit scratched but generally in good shape. We went against advice here and opted to travel south to the Mudgee road. Turning east then south at 289176, this road proved to be in better condition than the road in from Ben Bullen and had the added advantage of passing through a magnificent gorge with towering sandstone cliffs on either side. After a short steep climb we were on the flat, high country. We went onto 'Cullen Bullen', 8931- 3N, at 296173 and at 297135 we veered right onto Long Swamp road, following the beginnings of the Cox's river. Turning right onto the bitumen at 301080, we had an easy run into Lidsdale, Lithgow and home.

Pantoneys Crown is a fantastic walk, however it is not for the faint hearted. The way up is a scramble and there is considerable exposure on the way down. 15 to 20 metres of 7 or 8mm rope, a 2 or 3 metre sling, one carabiner and the ability to put this together safely are essential items for all but the fool-hardy. If you try this walk without someone who has been there before, you will probably not find the way up. If you do, it is highly unlikely that you will find the way off the southern end. It should also be noted that in such a confined area, tracks are conspicuous by their absence. In particular, there are absolutely no tracks leading to the start of the descent route at the southern end.

— John Sharples

Dragon Boat Regatta 15 October 2006

Sandy Hungerford (leader) and about 20 dragoners.

The Regatta was a wonderful success and overall we had a great day. There were 18 teams and they were pretty daunting – one team was dressed head to toe in those disposable white anti-infection suits and was nicknamed the Sperm Donors. This led to Throsby Creek being renamed Fallopian River and the pressure for a team name was on. We did not want to be seen to be like condoms and with our bright red shirts we called ourselves the Flaming Dragons.



The Flaming Dragons manoeuvre into position for the race

We were in three heats altogether. Given this was our first attempt we didn't do too badly as our best time on the first heat was 1min 37 secs. We were motivated by our war chant:

Oigal Oigal
Here we are
Flaming Dragons
Best by far!

For a time this chant worked really well as initially we were only 5th last. The winning times were 1:22 whilst the worst (which may have been ours) was 1:45. But then, sadly, as the heats progressed and we grew tired our times grew longer.

I want to thank all those intrepid paddlers for their constant and patient enthusiasm. It was difficult in that we had some people that had only participated in one training run and there is so much technique involved which changed by the minute as our times deteriorated. Also one paddler was not able to keep stroke which sent us into a spin.

As well as good paddlers we had some wonderful support from ground crew with tea and coffee

(plunger coffee was optional) throughout the day. We had some *rah rah* supporters and thanks to all especially Michelle Ferguson who was brave enough to let us take her drum to sea.

The day was so successful that people have been talking about getting serious for next year and we have been considering some bimonthly training options.

— Sandy Hungerford

Blue Mountains Music Festival March 2008

Once again 'the hills were alive with the sound of music'. Throughout the weekend we enjoyed a variety of Aussie and international groups and soloists, many being quite seasoned entertainers. The BMMF operates to an overlapping program in which there are often five or six acts on at the same time in different Katoomba venues (pubs, halls, school yards, marquees and tents). Participants buy a wrist band/ticket and can choose what they'd like to see.

There were hundreds of performers and we were entertained to the sounds of fiddles, accordions, acoustic guitars, banjos, pianos, drums, mandolins, concertinas, bouzoukis, percussion, flutes, pipes, harmonicas and of course splendid vocals. For me the highlights were Ruthie Foster, a gospel/blues singer with a phenomenal voice that gave me goose bumps, and our local Brewster Brothers (formerly the Angels) who were awesome. Elana James was also a favourite with her lively performances and alluring eyes. And who could forget the Spooky Mens Chorale ... what, never heard of them? Well go to <http://www.spookymen.com.au/home.htm> for a promo video of the guys in action. Five of us were able to stay to see the music through to the end this year and we returned home on the Monday.

But back to the beginning. There were four starters arriving on Thursday evening to partake in Friday's Grand Canyon loop walk, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. This is truly a beautiful walk, a must for all bushwalkers and was our first walk for the weekend. Well now I think about it, it was the second; the first on the previous evening was the traditional walk of historic Katoomba. This walk was in fact repeated each evening due to its popularity, and allowed us to take in the ambiance and grandeur

of various buildings, especially the Carrington Hotel, with its ornate architecture, chandeliers, antiques and fine carved bars. Our dedication to history was such that we found time to visit many of the local establishments!

The remainder of our group arrived on Friday afternoon and gathered at the RSL for dinner. In all 15 turned up for the weekend. This year no walk took place on Saturday as we all went to the Poet's Breakfast to extend our cultural appreciation. We were entertained by some quite clever and witty bush poets, speaking rhythmically of social justice issues and political statements mixed with some genuinely funny stuff.

On Sunday five of us went on a short walk of about an hour and half from Evans Lookout to Govetts Leap. I've found all walks in the Blue Mountains quite majestic and this one was no exception. A relatively easy walk was enjoyed with spectacular valley views and water falls.

One water fall was very impressive as, with the assistance of some strong wind currents, it succeeded



The Brander Effect — rain falling upwards!

in defying the laws of gravity by flowing upwards! After a drenching as we went along the track we decided to name this the 'Brander Effect' in deference to Andrew Brander who first generated this phenomenon on a rainy day at Bundanoon which some Ramblers may recall. I've already booked rooms at the Katoomba YHA for next year and I'm looking forward to sharing the experience with you again next year.

— Glenn Bird

Report: Walking in Central Australia

23 August to 7 September 2008

This was an extended Club trip to walk sections of the Larapinta Trail and visit Palm Valley, Kings Canyon and the East MacDonnell Ranges.

Bob (leader) Ingrid, Malcolm, Peter, Grace, Helene and Noelene flew to Alice Springs to meet up with Carol and Robyn who had driven overland via the Oodnadatta Track. The first task after picking up our Nissan Patrol and Toyota Hilux Dual Cab from Alice Camp'n'Drive was to pick up the \$1000 worth of food pre-ordered through Coles earlier that week. Somehow the four trolleys of boxes and 26kg of bananas was piled into the ute and barely covered by a tarp. Our packs and bags just fitted into the Patrol and on its roof rack.

Our first night and two others later in the trip were at the Stuart Caravan Park in Alice Springs. Whilst a bit crowded it was friendly and quite satisfactory, with some of our group camping and others booked into cabins. After an interesting morning in the Todd Street Mall with the Sunday market, we headed west for our first dusty and very basic bush camp at Serpentine Chalet. We called into Simpsons Gap, and Standley Chasm on the way.

The next day was our first major walk, along Section 7 of the Larapinta Trail from Serpentine Gorge to Serpentine Chalet, some 18 km. The walk climbed steeply onto the ridgeline 300m above and then along to Counts Lookout (near where we had lunch), and then dropped down to the undulating foothills, which finally returned us to our camping spot. The views everywhere were, of course magnificent, particularly to the west from Counts Lookout towards Mt Sonder and over the Ormiston Pound (pictured below).



On Tuesday we took it a bit easier with short walks in Ellery Creek Big Hole, Serpentine Gorge, and the

Ochre Pits before settling in at the Glen Helen Resort on lovely green grass with available shower facilities. The walk through Ormiston Pound and its gorge is a 4 hour walk and would have to be one of the best in the MacDonnells because of the diversity of its habitat and vegetation. Everywhere there were stunning views and towards the end, the walk takes you through the gorge itself. We had our lunch with a couple of the local ducks beside one of the permanent waterholes and then made our way to Woodland Camp near Redbank Gorge, in preparation for our ascent of Mt Sonder. Leaving our camp by 6.30am to beat the heat, we were on top of Mt Sonder by 10am for morning tea and the superb 360° views.



The climb had been cool and quite windy, however once on top it became warm and still. A pair of eagles soared around us. We returned the way we had come taking lunch at a lower lookout before heading down into Redbank Gorge for a very cold swim. All up the walk had taken about 8 hours.

On Thursday we were off to the Hermannsburg Mission for lunch and an interesting look around, before picking up fuel and additional provisions. On the way to the Mission we passed Gosse Bluff, a massive crater that looms out of the flat landscape. The Lutheran Mission is where Albert Namatjira developed his painting skills and some of his artwork is on display. The establishment of the Mission really is a very interesting part of the history of Central Australia. The rest of Hermannsburg needed a good clean up of litter, and many back and front yards had sad collections of old vehicles.

The campsite at Palm Valley was beautiful beneath shade trees on the banks of Palm Creek. Facilities included solar heated showers and gas BBQs. We really enjoyed this location and that evening a young Ranger gave us a great presentation about the Park and its unique vegetation. While that was going on a low down dingo rifled through the camp scraps and dragged off Bob's daypack. A search the next day

found the pack under a bush some 200m away, complete with teeth marks.



Whilst at Palm Valley we completed two 3 hour walks. One was along a ridge which descended to the Creek floor to pass amongst the magnificent remnant Red Palms (unique to this location and remnants of an age when the Centre was much wetter). The Palms obtain their water supply from the slow release of water from the porous sandstone hills surrounding the Creek. The second walk was to the south from the camping ground over an exposed range with great views of the Finke River and Palm Creek.

On Friday we travelled the Mereenie Loop to the Kings Canyon area. For lunch we had called into the Kings Canyon Resort but our presence at the picnic tables next to the swimming pool was challenged by the 'Cleaning Nazi'. Being a bit unfriendly and too up market anyway we pressed on to Kings Creek Station which was less crowded and more our scene. We had a lovely grassy spot to ourselves for the next two nights.

Our strategy to beat the heat, the hordes of people, and buses on the iconic Kings Canyon walk failed, with some twenty buses all arriving at 7.00am, together with us. We let the crowds get ahead of us and were able to enjoy this beautiful 4 hour walk. Next we headed east to Rainbow Valley via the Henbury Meteorite Craters.

We chose the remote Ernest Giles Road to break down on whilst trying to transfer to the auxiliary fuel tank on the Nissan Patrol. Luck would have it that a passing 4WD driver was able to show us how to bleed the air from the fuel lines. It was the coldest day we had encountered so far with some sleety rain and strong wind, so our planned lunch at the craters did not eventuate – rather we headed to the roadhouse at Stuart Wells for a hamburger. We were lucky to meet Jim, the owner, and be introduced to 'Dinks' the performing Dingo (world famous). 'Dinks' did his stuff playing (or pawing) the piano and howling in time. It really was a very funny performance. We

reached Rainbow Valley late in the afternoon and did a quick walk around the area. The renowned sunsets on the stark cliff lines were not to eventuate and the barren camping location was cold and pretty bleak. We decided to head on into Alice to meet up with Carol and camp at our caravan park. It was a good decision and we all enjoyed a good night at the park.

Next we were off further east to Trepshina Gorge. The East MacDonnell Ranges, whilst similar to the West MacDonnells, have their own character. We arrived at a superb campsite beneath river gums on the banks of Trepshina Creek early in the afternoon.



The unbelievable colours of the gorge and cliff lines in the setting sun were unfolding as we set up tents. This site was to be our base for three nights as we explored local walks and attractions. We completed walks in the gorge, at the nearby John Hayes Rock hole, N'Dhala Gorge, and a drive through the Arltunga Historical Reserve with its history of early gold mining. We returned to our Alice Springs camping ground for our last night before flying out and you wouldn't believe it, but the top performers of the Australian Country Western scene were performing at the Alice Springs Showground on the Saturday night. It was a great night – very cold under clear skies with fried chicken and blankets. Sara Stora and Troy Cassar-Daly were performing.

It was a wonderful two weeks for all. We had agreed to share the food and cooking with each person responsible to plan and prepare one or two meals each. It worked well – it cost about \$10 per person per day for gourmet menus fit for kings. Each day had lashings of fruit on account of the fact that Coles had provided about four times the quantity ordered.

We have left a lot of great walking in the area for another trip in few years time.

— Bob Clifton

Great Ocean Walk October 2008

Phil and Karen Germon organised this great adventure. The walkers were Royce, Sylvia, Malcolm, Ingrid, David, Lynne and Lindsay.



The GOW starts at Apollo Bay in Victoria and finishes some 90 km later at The Apostles. The walk was over 8 days, through beautiful country with many different types of vegetation and fabulous views of the coast and cliff lines.

Day 1 saw us setting off in spitting rain with Sylvia more than a little concerned about the weight of her pack, which she had culled and culled again. We had some rock hopping to do with our packs which was when David had a spill. He didn't say much but battled on. By Day 4 he was in much pain and decided to go out when we got our food drop. It turned out he had broken a rib, we were lucky things were not much more serious for him. The first days walk was 10 km to Elliot Ridge, a lovely bush camp.

Day 2 was a 12 km trek to Blanket Bay which was the only safe swimming beach on the walk. Phil and Karen had a dip but it was too cold for the rest of us.

Day 3, another 10.5 km to Cape Otway was a very long day but beautiful forest and the odd koala to see - great walking. Otway Lighthouse was a highlight, it's perched on the cliffs and as you climb to the top you feel like you are hanging over the rocks and the wild ocean far below. The best homemade scones with jam and cream also make this a must if you happen to be going that way. Packs back on and a bit further to camp where we had some amazing close-up encounters with more koalas. I had no idea that the males made so much noise, and we had the most beautiful experience with a mother koala and her baby, watching her that night and the next morning.

Day 4 and on to Aire River, where David told us of his decision to finish. This was a 10 km day which had included a very long hot beach walk. We all decided to lighten our packs even more, which saw Lindsay accidentally hand in his fleecy jumper.

Day 5 saw more beach walking along wild beautiful surf, the weather hot, the walking tough in the sand. Our Johanna Beach camp site was very welcome when we arrived – perched on the cliff edge with beautiful views. A nice surprise once we had put up tents was the arrival of David, who had driven in Malcolm's car and then walked in to see us, bringing with him some cold beers. Normally a Corona girl myself, I can tell you that a VB never tasted so good! David had been to the doc in Apollo Bay and found out his rib was cracked, so was pleased he had made the decision to pull out. Bob and Fiona had joined us at Aire River and were spending the night at Johanna Beach. They walked part of the way the next day then David met us again and drove them out. It was lovely to catch up with some 'old' Ramblers. That night we watched a beautiful sunset over the ocean.



Day 6, 13.4km. A big day to Ryans Den followed by **Day 7**, another big day, 15.5km to the Devils Kitchen. I must add at this point that Sylvia was second into camp each day, only just behind the unstoppable Royce. They are both an inspiration and such great walking companions. Once our camp was set up at Devils Kitchen we ventured down the cliff to Wreck Beach which was amazing. Anchors from shipwrecks are embedded in the rocks and such a reminder of the sad history of the area. I have to mention the toilet at Devils Kitchen. It has to have one of the best views in the world. Built on top of the cliff edge with a big window that looks over the ocean, it is incredible. Local legend has it that a Swedish backpacker proposed to his girlfriend at the Devils Kitchen Dunny! Well it was a pretty nice place.

Day 8, our last day, 13.5km to the finish was mostly along fire trail. We ran into some surveyors who were in the process of marking a new track to the finish. We trudged through the sandy grass hills and then we came over a hill and there in front of us were the Apostles - very exciting! We had lunch with the loveliest views and reflected on our last eight days.

— Lynne Mercer

A Tale of Two Hats

Tony Winton



Many years ago when backpacking down Breakfast Creek, (which is a delightful way to access Wild Dogs in the Blue Mountains National Park) I stumbled upon my first hat. It was a felt one and wedged high up in a tree. The creek was still partially in flood but the water-logged hat was now safely above the water which had apparently been quite high. Amazingly we passed a few more hats, only of a lowly cotton type, and left up in trees to rot. We wondered when we would find the rotting bodies of the hapless hatless owners.

The felt hat had seen better days, but it was love at first sight and I hooked it onto my pack as it was still very soggy. The belief that it had belonged to an old man named Carlon, a local landowner who was an iconic figure in these parts, added to its value. He wasn't going to get it back! I carried that hat for the next few days up the ridges (Dogs) and down the spurs (Pups) as this area has been named after various assorted dogs of many colours.

The hat eventually dried and became my constant companion on many backpacks and outdoor pursuits. From a life as a working hat in the Blue Mountains it became a well travelled hat seeing much of Australia. Already very battered it took the brunt of much bush bashing in the Wollemi over the years. It also appeared in Robyn Rye's great photo of the Budawangs, featured in the Ramblers calendar, definitely having more character than Peter's mundane head wear shown as well!

Sadly, time caught up with it and it had to go. Hat Heaven you are probably thinking, ashamedly it was the wiz bin. But my conscience made me recover it from the depths of the bin and it has been relegated to minor outdoor work duties, at least until it disintegrates. My beloved bought me a new one from the hat shop at Katoomba, retaining the vital link with the bush. It was pristine, with a chin strap that worked and no holes in the top, and left little change from ninety dollars. I felt a bit strange wearing it.

A few months ago I was able to initiate my new hat to the wilds. I was leading an easy flat water paddle down the beautiful Karuah River and the hat took preference over a helmet. Surprisingly the flat river

had some rapids. It was on the first of these unplanned events that my hat was torn from my head by a low branch. With Ingrid as the front paddler in my Canadian I had no time to grab the errant hat as we were flat out trying to keep upright in the turbulent water. I was mistaken in the belief that it would float to the surface. As I returned to retrieve it, before my eyes the hat sank like a stone into about a metre of fast brown water. All efforts at recovery were in vain. We waited a while in the optimistic hope of it just popping up. I pondered over the issue of having not used the well designed chin strap that was provided, and just what would I tell Denise. I spent the rest of the day with a towel on my head as protection from the sun.

So ends my sad tale of two hats. A biblical quote seems appropriate. "What the creek giveth, the river taketh away" or something like that. Hopefully Santa may come to my rescue.

— Tony Winton

P.S. He did!

Sleeping in the Forest

I thought the earth
remembered me, she
took me back so tenderly, arranging
her dark skirts, her pockets
full of lichens and seeds. I slept
as never before, a stone
on the riverbed, nothing
between me and the white fire of the stars
but my thoughts, and they floated
light as moths among the branches
of the perfect trees. All night
I heard the small kingdoms breathing
around me, the insects and the birds
who do their work in the darkness. All night
I rose and fell, as if in water, grappling
with a luminous doom. By morning
I had vanished at least a dozen times
into something better.

— Mary Oliver

New Zealand Volcanoes, 2008

The purpose of the trip was to visit the volcanic areas of the North Island, then do some tourist things. Five of us met in Auckland on 9 February, and Ken joined us later at Ohakune. We set off for Taranaki, an extinct volcano that forms the big bulge on the left side of the North Island.

We intended to do a three day backpack on the Pouakai Track plus a few day walks. Sadly, they had had torrential rain for several days before we arrived, and we were advised not to attempt the track as the small creeks had become raging torrents and were quite dangerous. Moving on to our next volcano, we drove to Ohakune, near Tongariro National Park in the centre of the North Island. This park has two active volcanoes. Ngauruhoe is the most active, having erupted on average every 10 years since the 1800s, except during the last 25 years ...



Near the crater of Mt Ngauruhoe

Mt Ruapehu erupts irregularly in a minor way, the last being in September last year.

Silica Rapids was formed where a stream ran out under a lava flow loaded with minerals and deposits the dissolved material on the rocks it passed over, leaving them coated in white. Our backpack was the Northern Circuit, a four day trip around Ngauruhoe and returning to Whakapapa. The attraction of this walk is the very different landscapes you walk through. Our first day was walking up a valley between lava flows. Lava is very rocky and jagged, with lots of loose material. Because of the scarcity of soil, there are few plants, mostly clumps of grass.

The Northern Circuit track leads up a narrow ridge to the lip of the Red Crater. The last time I had been here, there was rain and a howling gale and we could not see anything. That time, we had all stopped in the middle of the track and stripped off to put on thermal Underwear. Nowadays, if the weather is that bad, the track is closed.



The peak of Mt Taranaki, near the town of New Plymouth

The Red Crater is coated with deep red, black and white minerals that make an astonishing sight. Down the other side are the Emerald Lakes, a series of pools that are coloured bright green due to dissolved minerals. The track carries on past the Blue Lake and around the side of Tongariro to Ketetahi Hut. There are hot springs nearby but they are on Maori land and visiting them now is prohibited.

We spent a day here, climbing up to the crater of the extinct Tongariro. The crater was once filled with lava that began to set as the volcano became dormant. Late in the process, a small explosion crater formed in the almost set lava, leaving a hemispherical hole several hundred metres across in the otherwise flat surface.

The track goes back to the Emerald Lakes, then sets off down between more lava flows down the Oturere Valley. Here another landscape begins, almost a sandy desert complete with rows of sand hills, leading after several kilometres into a thick beech forest and on to Waihohonu Hut.

Back at the hut, we found a group of Watagan Wanderers had arrived. Fortunately, we had claimed beds before we left in the morning, as there were now more people than beds. It later turned out there were over 40 people staying in a 29 bed hut.

The last day took us back to Whakapapa between Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu. This is a new landscape again, almost alpine. From Ohakune, we headed for Napier via the Gentle Annie Ranges. Napier was destroyed in an earthquake in 1931, and was rebuilt in the then current Art Deco style. Art Deco is characterized by shapes including ziggurats, sunbursts and zigzags, and these and other decorations can be seen on many of the buildings. We spent a few days in Rotorua before heading to Thames for an early morning dash to the airport at Auckland for our flight home.

— David Morrison

The Circumnavigation of Lake Macquarie



The Club's keen canoeists completed a circumnavigation of Lake Macquarie in 2011. This is a report of the first stage of this epic trip, when there seemed quite a long way to go.

Stage 1 Wangi Bay to Wangi Beach 9km 21 March 2009

Sixteen keen paddlers, some old faces, some new and some visitors, and Noelene and Paula with their shiny new craft, met at Dobell Park at 8am on an absolutely beautiful autumn morning. Wangi was chosen as the starting point of what is hoped will be the first of many steps in the circumnavigation of Lake Macquarie over the coming months for two reasons.

First, Wangi Point almost reaches across to Swansea, and as we rounded Wangi Point and took in the views we could appreciate Lake Macquarie's vast size.

Second, the narrow neck of land at our starting point meant no car shuffle was needed, with just a 100m walk between the start and finish, though involving a 9km paddle.



We left Wangi Bay boat ramp with the water like a mirror and headed east, following the shoreline and enjoying the clarity of the water on this glorious morning. Leaving the houses behind for now, we rounded a rocky headland to the peaceful bay at Wangi Point Caravan Park and stopped for a short break. With the threat of a rising northeaster we moved on hugging the shore and appreciating the beautiful bushland of this section of the relatively new Lake Macquarie National Park.

With plenty of fish and bird life about, we particularly enjoyed the opportunity to observe a pair of magnificent sea eagles soaring above us as we rounded the Point. The northeaster was picking up behind us as we soaked up the panorama from Swansea around past Nords Wharf, Pulbah Island and far to the south west to Morisset Peninsula and Myuna Bay. We came round into another sheltered bay out of the increasing breeze and took another break. Kayaks were swapped for test paddles while some enjoyed a swim, then we moved on toward our destination at Dobell Park. Arriving back at the Park most stayed and enjoyed a very pleasant picnic lunch, contemplating the full 175km of shoreline ahead, or 206km including Swansea Channel and larger creeks feeding into the Lake.



Paddlers in stage two, leaving Dobell Park Wangi.

— Col McCluskey

The Link Trail — Gloucester to Barrington Tops 8 - 10 January 2010

As we drove from Newcastle early on Friday the weather was cool, a bit inclement, and there looked to be clouds shrouding the mountain tops in the distance. We arrived at the start of the Link Trail about 9.45am (about a 3 hour trip) and after a quick look at a tidy Munro's Hut we were walking by 10.15am in lovely cool walking conditions with signs that the weather was clearing. The group consisting of Anna, Bob, Jim, John, Malcolm and Royce strode off strongly through the beautiful Antarctic Beech and open alpine forests – just enjoying the absolute beauty of this area.

Anna was the first to spot a snake – one of four for the weekend. We lunched in the last section of Antarctic Beech before the trail opened out into Snow Gum forest, and not far from a beautiful chilled natural water fountain beneath a tree fern on the side of the track.

We called in at the Wombat Creek camping location for a rest and another cool drink, before tackling the last section of the trail which includes a stiff 100m climb to Carey's Peak.

Low cloud was swirling across the little camp spot as we arrived and it was obvious that we would not be getting any views from the nearby lookout that evening. The walk had taken about 6 hours, for some reason, in contrast to our return walk on Sunday which took only 5 hours.

We set up camp in this lovely location and Royce was able to show us the nearby creek for our water supply. The beautiful stand of Snow Gums in this



location is the home of a magnificent bird population, which woke us early each morning.

The next day (Saturday) we completed the beautiful walk across Edwards Swamp to Junction Pools, and returned via Aeroplane Hill and the Black Swamp – a distance of 13 km – which took about 6 hours of leisurely walking and resting to take in the scenery of the frost hollows, swamps and the ruins of Edwards Hut. We had morning tea on the riverbank near Junction Pools where the Ramblers have camped on previous occasions.

It was great to see the efforts of the NPWS in controlling the Scotch Broom – there seemed to be less Broom about on this walk than when I was on the Tops some 10 years ago, and we didn't see any on the Link Trail itself.

The weather in the afternoon was rather hot and we were pleased that we were back in camp by 2.00pm to laze in the shade and take in the clear views and a nice sunset from Carey's Lookout.

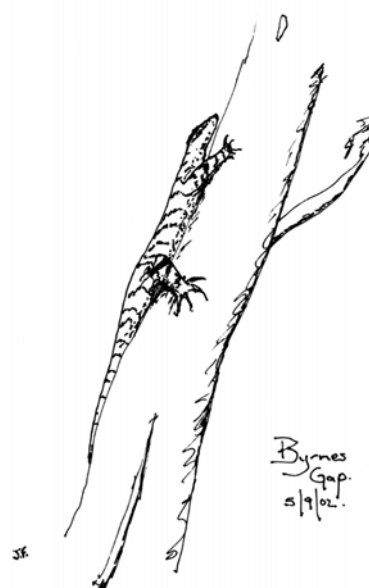


On Sunday we were packed and away early to retrace our steps and reach the cars near Munro's Hut by 1.00pm. Rather than have lunch there, we chose to drive for 30 minutes down from the Tops to the Gloucester River at the NPWS camping area. It was certainly very much hotter off the mountain but the swim in the river went a long way to soothing the aching bodies. After a brief stop in a very hot Stroud for a cool drink we were back in Newcastle by 5.00pm.

This is really a lovely walk and not a bad time of the year to do it.

Total distance covered over 3 days was 55km.

— Bob Clifton



The Ascent of Mt Gower, May 2010

Just take it one section at a time

In May 2010 a party of 26 Ramblers had a great holiday on beautiful Lord Howe Island. One of the many attractions of this sub-tropical resort is the foreboding Mt Gower. At 875m above sea level, this is a sizable peak (technically a basalt remnant of a volcanic caldera) and is talked about as arguably one of the best climbs on the east coast. As group sizes were limited, we had planned for two groups to climb the mountain, the more experienced ones on Monday and the others on Wednesday.

Now I don't have any street cred as a mountain climber and I had a few misgivings first, whether I really wanted to climb it and second, whether I was up to the task. So I did the sensible thing: I asked around about what was involved and I held off on coming to a decision.

Hubby thought he was being very helpful, pointing out that the walk was only 8.5kms, and that while it was indeed 875m high, we had done many walks that had lots of uphill and down dales, which when added up were close to this, and that on the return journey it was in fact all downhill! This all sounded very logical, but he hadn't done the walk and did not really know what was entailed.

So I kept listening in on briefings. The climb could only be done with an experienced, paid guide. Walkers were given safety helmets for one section. At one point there was a narrow ledge with a sheer drop to the sea but I was assured that the guide stood at this spot and would talk me through if I was out of my comfort zone. At many places there were safety ropes and in the steep parts there were climbing ropes to assist. The track was well defined, although there were no track markers. There were slippery sections and lots of tree roots, a good chance of rain, some exposed areas and the really steep knife-edge spurs had ropes to assist the climbers. Golly!

After overnight rain, Monday came and the first group of more experienced Ramblers set off about 7am for their trip up the mountain. They came back much later than expected, well after 6 pm, tired, muddy and exhausted. They variously said, 'This was the hardest walk I have ever done', there were 'great views but we had a bit of rain and the track was quite slippery' and 'I slipped numerous times and came down many of the slopes on my bottom' and 'it was a great experience, but my knees are stuffed' and 'oh, where are my anti-inflammatory tablets'. The group was late because they were held up by 'this 84 year

old bloke who fell and needed assistance to descend and there was a teenage girl who freaked at the



Mt Lidgbird, 777 m (left) and Mt Gower, 876m

heights'. Another off-putting aspect was that our dear 'Marathon Man', our veritable benchmark for fitness, was so knackered he skipped dinner and was not seen until the next day!

Tuesday was fine and the forecast for Wednesday was almost favourable. The Monday warriors were vertical again, subdued but all cleaned up. Marathon Man had recovered and said it was the best walk he'd ever done and he was going to do it again on Wednesday! A friend who went with the Monday group felt it was within my capabilities and advised '**just take it one section at a time**'. Sure, but I was worried about the height thing — I am not the one in our house who climbs the extension ladder and paints the bargeboards and guttering!

We went to see the tour lady, who said the guide (her son, Dean) would talk me through any sections that I was not comfortable with. So we paid our money and I was committed! Wednesday morning was overcast, but sunny with only a distant threat of rain. At 6.45am we were whisked off by the Island shuttle bus to the trail head and met our muscular, very fit and unassuming guide, Dean. We signed the form taking full responsibility for our actions and collected our helmets.

The initial stage of the walk was easy and at the end of the coastal strip Dean regrouped and told us about the forests that we'd be passing through. Then on the first steep section with thick ropes to aid the climb my heart began to race. At the top, we had a pause and my heart beat slowed, I was grateful for the stop. Dean gave another talk about the Island's geology. I didn't really listen I just ate a chocolate bar — I seldom eat chocolate but I thought 'if ever I needed this, it is now'. Helmets on and we entered the breathtaking Lower Road, a half kilometre long narrow ledge with a clear and unimpeded 150m drop to the sea, but no worries there was a safety rope to hang onto.

Another stop — and a muesli bar. Dean told us about the Island's flora and fauna, and counselled that the next part was the toughest section of the ascent as we would climb steeply towards the saddle between Mt Lidgbird and Mt Gower. The track went through delightful rain forest dominated by Kentia palms and Banyan trees. Thick poly ropes were installed at the steeper sections so we were able to use our arm muscles to boost our leg power. The track led to a rest stop at pretty Erskine Creek where we were able to refill water bottles and — more chocolate.

Dean explained that the track now climbed steeply to the saddle and up to a natural rock formation which had blocked the access of feral goats and pigs to the summit; consequently the flora of the summit was in pristine condition with many plant species that were endemic to the Island. Soon we reached a vantage point and could see straight over the pinnacle of the



nearby Mt Lidgbird (777m). In the distance were the coral reefs and lagoon, the distant hills and Mt Eliza at the end of the Island. While we laboured upwards, step after step, flocks of Providence Petrels were soaring upon the air currents. But we were all enjoying ourselves, Marathon Man especially.

More climbing and distant views of Balls Pyramid, perched like a geological ghost in the ocean. Then we came to a spot where Dean stood on the edge of the cliff and directed us up a long rocky section. I sensed this was 'the bad bit', kept my eyes on Dean and the way he was pointing and listened to his instructions. I did not look down or dare think 'this won't be easy coming down'. I concentrated only on the job at hand, finding hand and footholds. The rope really helped us to pull up this very steep exposed ridge.

Once at the top, the wind-whipped shrubs actually gave us an undeserved sense of security as we couldn't see how sheer the drop was to the ocean far, far below. We regrouped in a little forest glade and Dean told us more about the Providence Petrels that only breed on Lord Howe Island. They are an immensely curious species. He gave a loud whooping call and dozens of Petrels plummeted down through the trees to flop at our feet to see what was going on. I was not impressed when one dropped willy nilly

and landed on my head! Some people actually held a bird in their hands, but this was not for me!

Upwards and onwards through the mossy shrubs, ferns, bush orchids, lichen and twisted roots to the summit and a rather small grassy clearing where we ate our lunch (sitting almost on top of one another) as we took in the superb vista of Lord Howe Island spread out in the ocean below. There was a brief stop before Dean urged us back on our feet. The descent could be difficult and he wanted to get started.

Going down was indeed all downhill but I felt apprehensive because we were up a heck of a long way. Fortunately Bruce preceded me and told me where he had found foot and handholds. The ropes were a godsend for the descent and I did learn some abseiling skills, so thanks Andrew for your advice.

Then came the scary section where I couldn't see the bottom of the rock face. I welded myself to the rope, searching for hand and foot holds and slowly descended until Dean's head came into view and I was relieved when he said 'put your foot there to the right'. But after a while, going down backwards on a long rope became rather fun and I found I was enjoying the descent. Of course there weren't always ropes and the descent went on and on with me bracing on trees and securing my hand and footholds before taking each step.



Towards the end my knees were telling me it had been a **very** steep descent and I was relieved when we reached the pretty little glen of Erskine Creek (**picture above**) as I then knew we were over the steepest parts. Then the time came for us to don helmets again for the Lower Road ledge. The last part of the walk seemed endless, but we managed to finish the walk about 5pm intact, unmuddied and undamaged and were pleased to be greeted by our fellow Ramblers who were out on a bird watching tour. We were tired but had a great sense of accomplishment! And it was great testimony to the advice that you can do it if you **just take it one section at a time.**

— Grace Farley

Colo River by Rubber Boat 26 September to 2 October 2010

John Sharples



Five Ramblers, Peter, Robyn, Pauline, Lois and John plus our trusty porters made our way down the Canoe Creek track with boats, boat boots and packs for a projected six days down the Colo to Meroo Plantation. After inflating the boats the river crew camped at Canoe creek while the porters headed back up the track to the cars and home.

We headed off on Monday morning in glorious sunshine and soon had our somewhat coracle-like craft under a modicum of control. By lunch time Monday we were quite adept at shooting the rapids, getting stuck in rock blocks and beaching the craft to tip out the gallons of water that frequently poured in over the side, front, rear or other side. Each day consisted of around 5 to 6 km of paddling then set up camp on a sandy shelf and relax for the rest of the afternoon.

On Wednesday morning we were preparing to break camp when a police helicopter appeared overhead. Having previously entered our trip details for our personal locator beacon on the web site of the



Australian Maritime Safety Authority, we knew they weren't looking for us, but the chopper circled and came up river quite low and checked we were OK.

It then headed further upstream and landed some three or four hundred metres away. Shortly thereafter the chopper took off and then four young men in two Canadian type canoes appeared. Through discussion with them we learned they had walked from the Putty Road, some 10 kms, with the canoes on trolleys one

of which broke. Their supplies and preparation for the trip were totally inadequate and they were already overdue before they reached the Colo.

We continued down stream, occasionally sighting the drag marks of their canoes, for the rest of Wednesday and Thursday until we made camp. About 5.00pm another chopper appeared overhead and continued upstream. This one also returned and landed on a nearby sandbank.



They were still looking for two of the four and after giving them what small information we had, they continued their search downstream.

Early Friday morning we spotted one of their canoes wedged between rocks and held by the full force of a rapid. We soon came on some abandoned gear and at Bob Turners track saw evidence of a canoe being dragged out of the water. We continued on and arrived at Meroo, in high spirits, just before lunch on Saturday.

Apart from the obvious, our trip had been exciting, hard work and uneventful. The scenery in that part of the Colo is breathtaking and we enjoyed fine weather for the whole trip. On arrival at Meroo, however, things changed for the worse. The rain set in and with our largish support team we spent the next two days confined to the shelter shed.

Visits from members of Kuringai and Sydney Bushwalking clubs, as well as various others, kept our spirits up and Robyn's birthday party on Saturday night shook the rafters.

P.S. If any of you have been awakened, in the dead of night and in a lonely bush setting, by the mating call of a koala you will understand our reluctance to spend the rest of the night in tents!

— John Sharples

Petra

A traveller's note helps in understanding the magnificence of this ancient edifice. Petra is an historical and archaeological city in Jordan that is famous for its rock cut architecture and water conduits system. It was established sometime around the 6th century BC as the capital city of the Nabataeans and is one of the most visited tourist attractions in Jordan. It lies on the slope of Mount Hor in a basin among the mountains which form the eastern flank of Arabah, the large valley running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba.

The site remained unknown to the Western world until 1812, when it was 'introduced' by the Swiss explorer Johan Ludwig Burckardt.

The giant red mountains and vast mausoleums of a departed race have nothing in common with modern civilization, and ask nothing of it except to be appreciated at their true value - as one of the greatest wonders ever wrought by Nature and Man.

It was a vast, unique city, carved into the sheer rock face by the Nabataeans, an industrious Arab people who settled here more than 2,000 years ago, turning it into an important junction for the silk, spice and other trade routes that linked China, India and southern Arabia with Egypt, Syria, Greece and Rome.

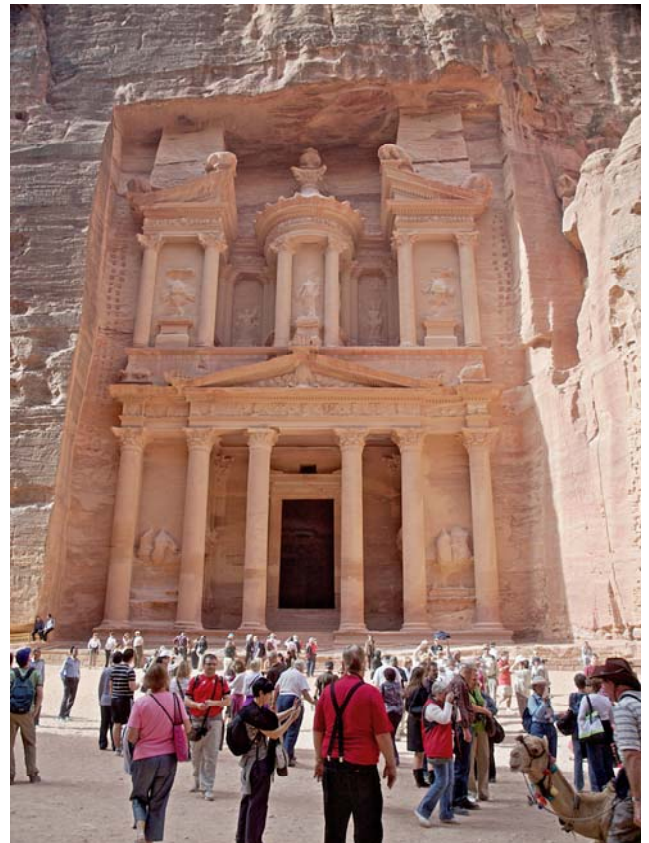
Entrance to the city is through the Siq, a narrow gorge, over a kilometre in length, which is flanked on either side by soaring, 80 metre high cliffs. Just walking through the Siq is an experience in itself. The colours and formations of the rocks are dazzling. At the end of the Siq is the first glimpse of Al Khazneh, the ancient Treasury.



The Siq, the narrow gorge that is the entrance to Petra

Petra is regarded as one of the 40 places you just 'have to see'. Last year a group of Ramblers had the pleasure of doing just that, and this is their report.

Petra, this was the reason we actually came to Jordan. Nothing can compare to seeing the Treasury (Al Kazneh) in real life, after having seen it in films and books for years and years and years. No, it is not a spiritual experience. It cannot be when you walk out of the Siq and find several hundred people milling about, to say nothing of the souvenir stalls along the other side of the narrow cleft we are standing in.



The Treasury

But in real life it is big. You stand there looking up, and it is a long way to the urn at the top. What a grand style of building, one that would stand well in the streets of London. And it was made over 2000 years ago.

I read a comment that said the Nabataeans (who built Petra) were not so much architects as sculptors. They didn't make freestanding buildings, but carved them out of the living rock as a sculptor does. The whole of the Treasury, columns and all, stands exactly where the sands were laid down millions of years ago.

But turn to the right and follow the Siq to the Street of Facades. The Treasury is by no means the grandest building in Petra. It is just the best-preserved and the best positioned for modern day tourists. There are

dozens of others, big and small, plain and grand, badly eroded or still almost pristine. All share one overwhelming characteristic - the glorious colours in



Street of Facades

the sandstone. Red, orange, yellow, white, blue, grey, in magnificent whorls that you cannot believe are natural.

The 'road' turns right and on the outside of the corner is an amphitheatre. 5,000 people once sat here watching performances or listening to great speakers. Sandstone now, it was originally lined with marble brought from Aswan in Egypt. The Nabataeans were very rich.

More souvenir and drink stands, but they don't seem out of place. They give life to the ancient city, a reminder of what a bustling place it must once have been.

Down further into the open and we are on a paved Roman road, lined once with columns in a colonnade. Only a few bits remain of that glory. To one side the king's palace, once thought to be a temple, but then a Turkish bath was discovered in the structure. The temple was on the other side of a small gully, spanned by a bridge of steps leading up to it. Towards the bottom, another big temple, its walls substantially intact despite many earthquakes over the centuries. Its secret - wooden bracing built into the walls to provide a bit of flexibility.

All the while, the cliffs and hills showed carved forms, man-made caves, elaborate facades, surviving all that time.

The Monastery? We had wondered whether our guide would take us up to one of the high viewpoints. He didn't, but had allowed time for us to climb the 700 steps to a building once thought to have been

used as a monastery. And what a building! Bigger than the Treasury. More grand as it stood out from the hill, its pediments and statues exposed to the



The Monastery

elements. With room to stand back and admire the work of the artist who had made it.

Could there be more? Yes indeed! Returning to the valley to retrace our steps, there were the Royal Tombs, The Urn Tomb, the Crow-Step Tomb, the Silk Tomb, the Corinthian Tomb, and more, each one with a notable characteristic that made it different to the others.



Inside a building

Walk inside one and be amazed at the depth of the colours of the rock that has not been dulled by exposure to the elements. Inside another a huge room carved out of the rock, awing in its majesty even though nothing remained of its original inhabitant.

And then the trek back to the bus, discovering more as we walk, dazed by the splendours of the day.

— David Morrison

Cycling the Byways of the Hunter

Keith Jones

What do old Ramblers do when their knees begin to knock, their ankles get sort of stiff and their toes begin to crackle? They get on a bike: they still have to pedal uphill but *hey* they can coast along the flat and go for free downhill! Cycling is a most efficient means of transport, has ultra low CO₂ emissions and is good for burning excess calories.

How did all this start? There were some early bike rides with Peter Rye, Hans Meier, Jenny Bourke and John Foskit, and Arthur Radford led some good rides around the country lanes of Dungog. Then others



started taking mountain bikes on car camps. Now there's a small but dedicated group of Ramblers (led by Keith Jones and Robyn Rye) who have taken to the sport and become keen cyclists.

Our exploration of the region has brought an interesting realisation. There is a great legacy left to us by the steam age and the coal barons of the last century in the form of disused train and tram corridors. These run all over the place along gentle gradients through picturesque suburbs and bushlands. They are being transformed by local councils into wonderful, safe cycleways.

Here are some favourites:

Fernleigh Track — this follows the old steam train route from Adamstown to Whitebridge, Redhead and now on to Belmont, a distant of some 16 kms. It goes past suburban gardens, through the old Fernleigh train tunnel and into the bushlands of Highfields before descending through coastal heath to Redhead and then on a long elevated ramp through the swamp to Belmont TAFE. This cycleway is quite a resource and is a beautiful ride.



Wallsend to Nobbys — through some quiet backstreets and then onto dedicated cycle paths through Jesmond Park to Lambton, past the sporting arenas and then the backstreets of Broadmeadow to Tighes Hill, along the cycleway to the harbour foreshore (*past all those enticing coffee shops*) thence to the breakwater and Nobbys Headland. Wonderful!

City to Stockton — catch the ferry over to Stockton and a whole new beachside is open for exploration. The views from the northern breakwater of the city, the harbour and ships entering port are quite entrancing.

Murrays Beach — starts at Blacksmiths Beach, along the old Pacific Highway (now a dedicated cycleway) to Murrays Beach and return via the Wallarah Peninsula fire trail to Caves Beach and then through Swansea, over the channel bridge to Pelican.

Adamstown to Glendale — through quiet back streets and along the cycleway to Lambton, on through the park to Jesmond then more cycleway to Wallsend. A tunnel takes us under the expressway link road and then a surprise awaits: a new concrete cycleway with a gentle hill climb through tall eucalyptus bushland and an easy descent to Glendale.

Lake Macquarie — The Speers Point cycleway has been extended in two directions. To the south, it goes around the Lake past Warners Bay, along an elevated



track over the water at Red Bluff and on to Eleebana. To the north, the bike path goes through Speers Point Park, alongside the Five Islands highway to Booragul and on to the LMCC Art Gallery. These are beautiful rides at any time, but especially so in the early mornings when the fish are jumping and pairs of dolphins are seen cruising the lake.

Trips further afield have included circuits of Lake Munmorah, Lake Budgewoi, the Tuggerah Lakes and the occasional whale watching at Norah Head.

What sort of bike? There are many old steel frame bikes still in use as well as light weight alloy and carbon fibre machines. Club cyclists are very helpful in guiding newcomers in the choice of bikes and associated gear and the Club's ten minute training segments now include talks on bike maintenance and road safety.

— Keith Jones

Ramblers Club 50th Anniversary Reunion 30 April – 1 May 2011

Over 120 Ramblers gathered at the Glenrock Scout camp in Newcastle for the 50th reunion celebrations on the weekend of 30 April 2011. The event started on Saturday morning with Ramblers setting up camp on the grassy shores of Glenrock Lagoon or moving into on-site accommodation.

There were two 'walk-ins' to commemorate the formation of the Club:

Arthur Radford led a group of 15 in an historic walk from the King Street site of the YMCA, where the Club had its origins, through the city parks and along the Newcastle southern beach fronts to Glenrock.

Glenn Bird led another group of 25 on a route that started at Redhead bluff and wound its way through the heath lands of the Awabakal reserve to Dudley beach and along the coast to the camp site.

Despite the threat of showery weather, there was a spirited group that renewed acquaintances and enjoyed afternoon tea and tasty slices and biscuits. There was a display of old camping gear, selections of old photographs and details of the forthcoming Anniversary magazine and photo collections.

Later there were other refreshments over 'happy hour' (which people seemed to wish to go on and on) near Glenrock beach. The afternoon sun burst through persistent grey rain clouds and a big sea swell provided a dramatic atmosphere.

The evening started at 7.00pm with a formal dinner (imagine the Ramblers doing that!) in the main hall, which had been set up and decorated with bush greenery and native blooms for the banquet. Thanks **Jill Clifford** for your delightful harvest of flowers and greenery, all carefully selected from local 'urban wastelands'.



Bob Clifton proved he was an excellent and humorous MC and kept the proceedings on track.

Ramblers President 2010 – 2011 **Robert Gascoigne** welcomed everyone. He paid tribute to the dedication of the active Ramblers who had done so much to generate interest in bushwalking and the other Club activities, to provide leadership and skills, and to

instill the joy for an active outdoor life, the *élan vital*, that had been so important in the Club's success.



Life membership awards of were made to three Ramblers who had provided distinguished contributions to the Club over an extended period. The only other Life Member, **Joan Robinson** made the presentations, which were to:

Arthur Radford — a member of the Club for 22 years and at various times President, Vice President, Secretary, Walks Leader, a member of the Management Committee and editor of the Newsletter, for distinguished contributions in many areas including bushcraft leadership, mentoring, walks and knowledge of local history.



and navigation, planning, and

David Morrison — a member of the Club for 28 years and at various times was President, Vice President, Secretary, Walks Leader, a member of the Management Committee and editor of the Newsletter, for distinguished contributions to the Club in many areas including bushcraft and navigation, leadership, mentoring, walks planning, knowledge of national parks, and the utilization of information technology.



Barry Collier — a member of the Club for over 40 years and at various times was the President, Treasurer, Walks Leader, a leader in bushwalking courses and active in the management of the Club, for distinguished contributions in many areas including leadership, mentoring, walks planning, and imparting knowledge of local Australian fauna and flora, and photography and its technology.



Joan Robinson made a long overdue confession that it was **she** who had performed the artistic surgery to the torso of Oigal that had radically reduced his stature! – and all because he wouldn't fit in the space on her copy page! Well, indeed!

During the dinner there was a touch of Ramblers campsite reality when several people were needed to keep a gourmand possum away from the desserts. **Barry Collier** provided an excellent after dinner speech and provided an entertaining picture of what bushwalking was like in the 1960s and 70s.

Wayne Devonshire followed with the screening of excerpts of archive Super 8 movie footage of early Club walks into the Barrington ranges and Lilo trips down fast flowing sections of the Allyn and Williams rivers. But who allowed the diabolical rock hopping race down the river!? These were early movies, shot with difficulty under canopy, dark, flickering, young people in familiar landscapes, and entirely fascinating. Thank you Wayne!

Malcolm Mills moved a vote of thanks to all who had done so much to organise the reunion. **Lois Simpson** and **Rosemary Lovell** for overall coordination, **Carol Bastian** and **Bob Clifton** for tracking down former Ramblers and many others who had worked behind the scenes.



And it wouldn't be a Ramblers event without a campfire. About 45 Ramblers gathered around the bonfire that **Peter Rye** had organised in a huge cauldron (surely seen well out to sea) which proved to be a magnet for the entertainment that followed well into the evening. Highlights included **Allan Wright's** word perfect recital of the 'Wingen Whinger' and singing and music to guitars and recorder and violin. Overall it was a great opportunity for newer members to learn the history of the Club and the outstanding calibre of the early members.

Sunday morning saw the campers gather for a cook-up breakfast, more reminiscences, another walk led by **Lois Simpson** around the coastal heath lands, and eventual farewells.

— Peter Farley

At the Reunion

(photo credits: Peter Rye)



Jenny Whyte and Audrey Gray



Dot Wright, Wayne Devonshire and Allan Wright



Doug Curry and Paul Henkel



Elaine and Len Dyall

At the Reunion



Bruce Bastian and Kim Manhood



Happy hour on the lawn



Louise Clifton and Sandy Hungerford



Dianne Douglas and Shane Kerr



Col McCluskey and Robyn Cole



Jetse and Martine Kalma



Glenn Bird and Doug Curry



Chris and Kate Jones



Royce Hirnan



Grace Farley



Peter Crawley



Lois Simpson



Tony Winton



Robyn Rye



Diane Bergfels



Peter Rye



Greg Powell