

* * * * *
* * * * *
* T H E N E W S *
* * * * *
* * * * *

No. 28.

of

12th January, 1951.

.....THE MELBOURNE BUSHWALKERS.....

The New Year is now well under way, and we are writing 1951 without error, but it is still not too late to wish you happiness and good bushwalking in the year ahead. For most of us long holidays are over, but as walkers we have this consolation, that every weekend can be another holiday of escape into the bush, and we look forward to another year of pleasant companionship in the open-air. It seems likely that our membership will continue to grow, and we appeal to all old members to give a friendly welcome to newcomers, and help them to feel at home with us as soon as possible. We also call on them to take an active part in the Club's progress, by exploring new tracks, leading walks, mapping and other activities.

Before Christmas we had an interesting display on the notice-board of Christmas cards from other clubs and from absent members, from places as far apart as Brisbane and the Antarctic! And you will be pleased to know that Norm sent out many cards on behalf of our Club.

We celebrated the Christmas season with an informal evening in the Club - Room on December 15th - the climax was a really Club-sized Christmas cake of Marie's baking, supported by a supper of most worthy small cakes. Marie saved part of the cake for the following Friday too, so that everyone could share in it.

In the Clubroom at present there is even more animated conversation than usual, and as for the photos --- !Well, we calculate that if they were pasted up they would just about cover the Clubroom walls! And this is not so surprising, since about a third of our members were away on the long-planned, eagerly-awaited extended trips.

Mt. Wellington Area - Snowy Plains - Mt. Speculation - Wonnangatta Station

Len Barr's party was small - only three - but their enjoyment was great, and they seemed regretful that they couldn't add to their 140 miles' walking. They were lucky in having fairly cool and overcast weather for their first three days' climbing, although it did lessen their desire for swimming in Lake Tarli Karng. They spent Christmas Day visiting the Gable End and the Sentinels, which give a view over the Lake, but their real surprise came that night. Len says, "While we were in Miller's Hut, at 9.15 pm there occurred the high spot of the trip. We all received the biggest fright in years as the first earth tremor any of us had experienced shook the mountain. The hut walls vibrated, the iron roof "sang" and the ground pulsed underfoot. It lasted about five seconds - just time for us to reach the door!- then ceased." But what imperturbable characters they were!--" We were soon back at our interrupted pineapple and cream, and the hair-raiser in no way affected our appetite." (Just to prove that it wasn't merely a Christmas celebration inducing hallucinations we mention that Frank Pitt's party, around their campfire in a saddle near The Bluff, some 30 miles away, also heard the rumble and felt a very slight tremor.)

Len continues, " On the 26th we visited Spion Kopje and continued on to Kelly's Hut. The crossing of the Snowy Plains on the 27th provided pleasant walking in picturesque surroundings. The weather was delightful, and there were attractive views to east and west as we traversed the large, undulating, grassy palins, fringed with snow gums, 5000' up on the Divide between the McAllister and Wonnangatta Rivers.

We spent a day at Guy's Hut and Bryce's Gorge. The Gorge is a grand sight, with its towering cliffs, reminiscent of the Grampians, and its waterfall plunging over a sheer cliff 200' high.

On 29th we went on to McAllister Springs - meeting Frank Pitt & Co. at Howitt Hut - and next day went over the Crosscut Saw in beautiful weather, though, by the time we reached our campsite on Mt. Speculation it was in heavy fog. The following day was fine again, and we returned to Howitt Hut, and New Year's Day saw us on the way down to Wonnangatta Station. This isolated and now uninhabited settlement is set on wide river plains, completely encircled by mountains. In the kitchen and pantry of the old house may be read the news of years long past, from newspapers and pictures

pasted over the walls, while today's news may be heard from the wireless - if you can coax a glimmer of life from the worn-out batteries. About 400 yards from the house is a little cemetery, its half dozen graves sheltered by a great pine tree - the earliest date is 1873 - and one is moved to ponder on the history of the pioneers who built up a home in this remote but lovely spot.

The way out now is over the Wombat Spur to Glen Lea, about 25 miles, and then by road to Stratford. and it was along this that we returned, regretfully, on January 5th."

Merrigig - Howqua River - The Bluff - Mt. Magdala - Mt. Howitt - Wonnangatta

A party of seven left Melbourne on December 22nd at 2.10 pm, by the newest diesel train, which gave an excellent trip to Mansfield, arriving about 6.45pm. Hire car transport was arranged to Fry's Road, just past Merrigig, and there was Felix waiting for us! He had left town early that morning and hitch-hiked up. A pleasant walk of nine miles brought us to late lunch by the Howqua River, and we proceeded another couple of miles up the river to a perfect camp-site in park-like surroundings. The Howqua Valley is most beautiful, and there are many good camp-sites. The track up the valley for most of the way is cut into steep hillsides above the river, giving pleasant views along its winding course. Christmas morning saw us leaving the river, following the track up the 16-mile Creek. The climb from here up to the "top" near The Bluff is fairly stiff, taking about 3½ hours. We were cheered on by the presents Fay had produced from a gay though improvised Christmas Tree.

From there on the walk was mainly along the "tops", with minor descents between the high points. The best views were from Mt. Magdala and Mt. Howitt, from which there is a clear full-circle view, and Buller, Cobbler, Buffalo, Bogong, and many others familiar to walkers were clearly visible.

Four of the party went out over the Crosscut Saw to camp at Mt. Speculation, where we saw the sun rise over cloud-filled valleys, only the highest peaks rising like islands from a turbulent sea. (Incidentally, we checked our watches by the known time of sunrise, allowing for the longitude, and in spite of protests from Nick that the sun was fast, claimed that all watches were slow - which was later verified by the radio.)

The afternoon of the 6th day brought us to Howitt Hut and the Big Event - opening our boxes of food, which was duly sorted and distributed. Six of the party went out without packs to Bryce's Gorge, about 9 miles distant, returning that afternoon to find Len Barr's party at Howitt Hut, sorting their food and preparing to go across the Crosscut.

Our party left next morning and descended a long, steep spur to the most beautiful Dry River Valley, which we enjoyed for about 4 miles before it opened out onto the plains of the Wonnangatta Station. We found a couple of the Mountain Tramping Club camped at the Station, which is now wholly unoccupied, except for rare visits by the Guys. We pressed on and camped that night not far from the famous Wombat Spur. The climb up this spur is not severe, but it is tedious and dry. Water was not found until about 2 pm., when we lunched, but from there on it was downhill - the last part of this spur is extremely steep. Camp was made among the St. John's wort near the Wongangarra River, and next day, following the track which hugs the river for some miles, and crosses its fairly swift-flowing waters three times, we reached Guys' (Glen Lea) about 2.30 pm. Here we were hospitably welcomed and treated to afternoon tea by Mrs. Guy (an ex-member of the Women's Walking Club, and very sympathetic to the needs of walkers) before leaving for our last camp-site some 3½ miles further on, where the mailman was to pick us up next morning.

The last day's travel, covering nearly twice the distance we had done on foot, was very tiring and hot, a not very pleasant close to an excellent trip. The weather had been wonderful, the party excellent in all ways, the scenery just right and the organization worked out in practice. No Christmas trip could want more! (P.S. - Only one complaint: Felix couldn't get a snake to roast!)

Mt. Kosciusko

"Yes. It's still there." is the report brought back by Geoff Christensen and party comprising K. (Sugar) Middleton, J. (McTavish) Low, R. (Film Speed) Eaton, N. (Half Speed) Paine, R. (Kiwi) Wilkin and D. (Gor'Blime) Varns.

Off to a flying start at 7 am Saturday morning from Rudder Grange with Y.H.A. canoe section, a one and a half day van trip of over 300 miles commenced a "browning off" process which, in another sense, was to continue for the rest of the trip due largely to sunny skies, high altitudes and reasonable exposures. And talking about exposures..... Don't mention the word while a certain R. (F.S.) E. is about. - At least don't say I didn't warn you!

From our jumping off spot at Biggara, we decided to take a 20 mile short cut to Tom Groggin's by following the Murray River. Like many short cuts, this

turned out to be sheer hard work, and after 2½ days of scrub-bashing, rock-hopping, tree-dodging, track-looking-all-over-the-place-for and similar happy fun and games, we staggered into Tom Groggin's one day behind schedule. Short cut - Phooey! In one respect from the leader's point of view this process was admirable in so far as a potentially villainous and mutinous crew had been reduced to a state of sheer nervous, mental and physical exhaustion, and rendered incapable of batting more than one eyelid at a time between the lot! Still, what else could be expected, having carried the Leader the last eighteen miles?!

In spite of all, however, the result was worth the effort. Where sections of the old track were found the going was excellent and the scenery magnificent, far surpassing even the Howqua in Victoria. (Voice off-stage: "But not the Wombat Spur." (For explanation see K. (S.) M.)) Surely some steps can be taken to have this track re-opened before it is too late!

Thereafter the rest of the trip was just TOO easy. 'We loped up the Leatherbarrel, roared up the Ram's Head, capered over Kossy, slid across the Snowy... .. Stop! That's a lie! Want to know the truth? Well, we just couldn't get across the Snowy. Breakfast time at Pound's Creek hut on Sat. 29th saw much scurrying and scuttling from tents to the hut as a thunderstorm landed ½ inches of rain plumb on the area in less than an hour. In no time the Snowy rose from a pleasant mountain stream to a roaring muddy torrent. An attempt was made to cross a tributary, Spencer Creek, by dangling R. (Wet Shirt) Eaton in on the end of a rope to test the depth, but not touching bottom at about 6 fathoms we reluctantly hauled him out again and gave the game, and incidentally the second half of our trip, away. N.B. Don't put butter in small creeks to cool off overnight unless equipped with full diving kit or an infallible weather prophet.

Forgoing our trip to Jagungal, the rest of our time on the tops was spent visiting vantage points such as the Blue Lake, Carruther's Peak, Lake Albine and Mt. Townsend before setting off down the much-famed Hannel's Spur for Geehi and Khancoban. The spur turned out to be a fizzle in the opinion of the party, being only moderately steep and horribly scrubbed up. "Never again!" was the universal comment. After a protracted clean-up in the Geehi we had an evening walk nearly into Khancoban, finishing next day with a ride to Corryong with the cream cans. Thereafter much gluttony and a trip home.

"Remarks on the party" So runs a heading on the Walks Report, and they leave the Leader only three lines. Blime! I could write a book! For instance, there was the guy who always had everything at the bottom of the pack..... And the Club Razor man who rolled on the Leader in the middle of the night, unintentionally, of course! Not to mention General Scavenger McTavish of the larger food party. And then that rumour about burning someone's nylon scantees.... Maybe we'd better stop. But GEE! She was a GOOD(??) trip.

(Signed) G. ("Time to get up Fellers") Christensen.
Alleged leader.

Wilson's Promontory

It was a happy party of ten who left Melbourne on Boxing Day for Fish Ck. and Darby. Camping overnight there, they were greeted next morning by a family party of eight kangaroos, and a few deer, quite near the tents. As a reward for being packed up very early, they had most of the packs transported to Tidal River with the camp stores - a good beginning for the trip. Visiting Tongue Point on their way, they were re-united with their packs at Tidal River in time for lunch, and then went on to camp at Frazer's hut. Next day they followed the now over-grown track to the light-house in pouring rain, with most of the view blotted out, but still claim it was wonderful - strange creatures, bushwalkers! Making the return trip to Tidal River they used the newly-cut track across Norman Point - a most enjoyable walk with beautiful views over the Bay - and crossing the sand-dunes to Oberon Bay they saw a herd of small deer - one of the party even found an antler, which no doubt is now hanging over his doorway! In the succeeding week they made trips to most points of interest on the Prom. - Lilly Pilly Gully, with its delightful profusion of ferns, beech-trees and lilly pillies along the upper reaches of Tidal River; Squeaky Beach, where even the sceptics had to admit the sands did squeak, and after Harold had lured the party into a cave he'd discovered, some fast times were made over the sands to the camp to escape the oncoming storm; Sealers' Cove, where, with the fish absolutely clamouring to take the hook, there was a hearty fish breakfast.

Norman Bay proved a highlight, for it was here they celebrated New Year's Eve, with a great camp-fire lighting up the waves, square-dancing and singing, AND a Marie-baked cake, said to be the best yet. We think they must have the honour of being the first Bushwalkers to walk in 1951, for at midnight they set out to walk across to Norman Point - the wild life thereabouts must have been astounded to hear such sounds of revelry at that hour!

On the morning of their last day (Sunday) it poured with rain. Neverthe-

less, most of the party, under the intrepid leadership of John Palmer, climbed Mt. Oberon, and were rewarded by a wonderful view when the clouds cleared while they were on top. A previous trip had taken five of the party to Mt. Bishop with John, and provided them with plenty of scrub-bashing and rock-climbing, as there is no track.

Returning on Monday, reluctantly, all were nevertheless in great spirits, with memories of fine views, good camping, and well, just ask any of them, and you'll hear all about it!

Also at Wilson's Prom. was a party of sixteen organised by Emil Slade. They left Batman Avenue on Dec. 23rd, at the unusual hour of 3 pm. - one of them was a bit late and had to thumb his way to Korumburra, where he caught up with the party in Gronow's luxurious new van. Port Welshpool was reached late at night. The morning brought disappointment, as the skipper of the launch would not undertake the trip to Sealer's Gove because of the strong easterly, so it was decided to go by van to Tidal River. However a party of "toughies", 5 boys and 2 girls, decided to risk an unknown trip with Ken as leader, going by boat to Corner Inlet and then overland to the east coast and Sealers Cove. (Ask any of them what scrub-bashing is !! They encountered swamp and dense undergrowth, mangroves, rock-climbing, and miles of beaches, with plenty of wild life, probably undisturbed by human contact for years.) The Tidal R. party, 7 girls (oh boy!) and 2 boys, found the track to Sealers' Cove surprisingly clear. Sealers' came well up to expectations, although not as isolated as formerly, and proved so very attractive that they remained an extra day, supplementing their rations with a "magnificent fish dinner" - 4½ fish! But the fun of catching them was worth a ton of fish. Returning to Tidal River, they then visited the Lighthouse, meeting Marie's party there, and returned via the sand dunes to Oberon Bay. From the top of Little Oberon they had a grand view of the whole of the west coast and islands far out to sea. The last night was spent with a gathering of all Bushwalkers and friends in the area, and at midnight the singing was still going strong, while next morning they finished the trip with surfing - a very happy, sun-burned crowd.

* * * * *

Some of our luckier members are still away, or due to leave on long trips - including a dozen or so going to Tasmania, and we wish them good weather and other blessings.

* * * * *

WALK - We were all very pleased to see "WALK" out just before Christmas, and congratulate Editor, Norm Richards, on bringing out a second number well up to the standard of the first - which is saying something. By now you have all had a chance to read it yourself, but don't forget to bring it to the notice of your friends and acquaintances, and help sell it. We want it to circulate as widely as possible among the interested public. Super salesman Egon had a bright idea, and while camping at Wilson's Prom. left copies of "WALK" with the Ranger and at the camp store, with the result that 18 were sold by the end of the week. How about copying this idea when you are away holidaying? There are many ways of "bringing the goods before the public" - have YOU any brainwaves?

* * * * *

"WILD LIFE" has begun 1951 in a new form, appearing as a 100-page journal in "digest" size. The contents have been widened in scope, and include many articles of more general interest than formerly, although all are still relevant to nature topics. One article of special and practical interest to us deals with the treatment of snake-bite. The title, "Pot. Permang. in the Discard", gives the answer to a doubt that has troubled us for some time, and with Crosbie Morrison as the author, we can regard it as authoritative; - Condy's Crystals does more harm than good in snake-bite treatment. We think all Bushwalkers should read this article.

* * * * *

COMING SOCIAL EVENTS are now receiving Marie's attention, and although it is too early to announce definite dates, we want to let you know that Theatre Nights are being considered for the National Theatre production of "Swan Lake" (2nd week in Feb.) and of "Carmen", and for the Borovansky season early in March.

* * * * *

"THE NEWS" Sub-Committee: FAY PITT (XB 5736)
MARGARET DARK (LA 4171)
GORDON COUTTS (WX 3910)

Hon. Sec.: Frank Pitt, 8, Railway Avenue, Brighton, S.5.