



THE NEWS

OF THE MELBOURNE BUSHWALKERS

Edition 342

MAY 1978

Price 3¢

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HALF-YEARLY DINNER

FRI. 9th JUNE

NB. NOTE CHANGE OF DATE NB.

AT

GREEK INN RESTAURANT

369 LONSDALE ST, MELB.

B.Y.O.

\$11-00 PER HEAD (DEPOSIT \$5-00)

BOOKINGS: SHELLY HAYES
786 4306 (H)

June 2-5 HATTAH - MURRAY RIVER - HATTAH

LEADER Alex Stirkul

Easy/Medium

TRANSPORT Private

MAP REFERENCE Altona Kulkyne State Forest and Hattah Lakes National Park.
1 1/2 mile

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE 50 kms.

We return once again to Hattah. To those people who have not been here before this area offers easy and pleasant walking through Mallee Bush. This walk is ideal for beginners and those who are contemplating coming out of retirement

June 23-25 BENNIES - COBBLER - LITTLE COBBLERS - BENNIES

LEADER Simon Arnold

Medium

TRANSPORT Van for Batman Avenue, 6.30 pm

No preview recieved.

WALK '79

If you have read a recent publication on bushwalking, conservation etc, perhaps you might review it in Walk, or if you particularly enjoyed leading a walk perhaps you can help others enjoy that walk via track notes.

It is hoped to run a feature article on the A.W.T. Project, so if you've anecdotes etc. you'd like to tell about your walk on the Alpine Track tell it in Walk '79.

We are still without an advertising manager and a volunteer for this not so onerous job would indeed be welcomed.

The deadline for articles and photographs is June 30th.

Hope to hear from you

Walk Editor.

LOST ?

One black vinyl briefcase containing important papers and documents. Last seen in Clubrooms at General meeting April 26th. Anyone with information of the whereabouts of the briefcase, please contact Geoff Crapper on Pri. 955793 or Bus. 254582. The matter is urgent.

FEDERATION A.G.M. HELD TUESDAY 2 MAY 1978.SUMMARY OF MEETING

President elected : Andrew Rothfield (MUMC)

Treasurer

No nominations and vacancy still exists.

Executive Committee : One vacancy still stands.

Annual Subscription : Raised from \$75 to \$100 max. (applicable for MBW)

Notice was given that the 1979/1980 Subscription fee will be \$1 per member for each club.

*** NOTICE OF MEETING***

If you have been procrastinating about not knowing enough about the facts behind the L.C.C. Proposed Abortion of the Alpine National Park and feel totally inadequate in writing a letter of disapproval to Mr Hamer then let us relieve you of this excuse by informing you that the V.N.P.A. has organised a meeting to be held in the Lower Melbourne Town Hall on Tuesday 23 May at 8pm to state their views on the L.C.C. Proposed Recommendations.

It is emphatically urged that ALL members of the club AND THAT MEANS YOU attend this meeting and show that bushwalkers do care about the grim fate of the Alpine National Park.

This will also be an opportunity to meet and mingle with members of the MUMC, MAWTC, YHA, CWCV, W.C.V. etc, etc. and share in a common objective of fundamental importance to all.

PLEASE NOTE

Due to the June long week - end sleazing a march on us the Half Yearly Dinner will now be held on the 9th June which is a Friday. The same venue remains.

Thankyou

Shelly Hayes

LOPEZ

Rumour has it that everyone had to leave their rucksacks outside the Hawthorn Town Hall at the recent YHA Bushies Ball because there certainly was'nt any room inside. 300 people turned up and for the modest admission of \$3 the organisers found they were in the embarrassing situation of making a \$500 profit on the very successful evening. Wishing we could be so lucky !

Mummajong would never have believed it, but at Sheeppark Flat recently - there was the leader of the medium walk blushing and mumbling and tripping over things. We got the distinct impression he was trying to TELL us something. Come to think of it, what do you call a very young Mummajong anyway ? A Mummajonglet perhaps? S.M.E.L.L.S. , where are you now. ?

MAY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

Official minutes will be posted in the committee room in due course. Some points which came up

- REFERRED FROM G.M. 26 April '78; (1) The general form of the letter suggested by the CCV was felt to be suitable for the letter to be sent to each government member.
- (2) Discussion concerning the form of approach and the membership of deputation to seek appointments with the appropriate members of Cabinet became rather unwieldy. Committee finally decided to refer it to further informal discussion at a meeting to be held on the 8th May '78 (see under Wilkinson Lodge, Below).

TREASURER: Balance 30th April; \$ 5103.99. Bills passed for payment at the meeting totalled \$920.53. A Gronows bill for nearly \$1000.00 is expected this month. ANZ cheque a/c holding \$512 to be closed and the balance to be transferred to investment a/c.

WALKS SECRETARY: Mar: 61v + 122m = 183 + 61w/e. LOSS \$196.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: 284 paid-up members. Between 80 and 90 have not renewed their subscriptions. Those still unfinancial after 24th May must re-qualify.

NEWS CONVENOR: Closing date 14th June. Notices re elections to the following vacancies ; (1) Vice-president (2) ordinary committee member (3) trustee to be held at the June General meeting to appear elsewhere in this issue of "News" (the June News will be too late. ("News" cannot now be printed until the Thursday of the week following the committee meeting).

SOCIAL SECRETARY: The wine bottling was a success, and is currently \$40 ahead. The red has run out, but there are still some whites available.

WILKINSON LODGE: As mentioned at the General Meeting on 26th April and given as wide publicity as possible in the limited time available, a meeting is to be (was to have been) held at Rex Filson's place 8th May to discuss the impact of the LCC Proposed Recommendations on the lodge with a view to formulating a submission.

FEDERATION: Notice of business for the A.G.M. to be held 2nd May contained some curious variations from both previous notifications and our delegate's recollections of the previous Council meeting. It is hoped that it will be possible to report fully on the FVWC AGM in "News" in due course.

SEARCH & RESCUE: Notice of this years S&R practice was received 2 days after the event.

DUTY ROSTER: 24 May Alison Blaker, Caroline Strickland, 31 May Bob Hayes, Rod Mattingley; 7 June Eileen Ayre, Graham Wills-Johnson; 14 June Arthur Francis, Elizabeth Mackenzie; 21 June Shelly Hayes, Libby Quarterman.

Meeting held 1st May, '78

Next meeting 12 June, '78 14 Hosier lane

Visitors Welcome.

7pm.

PLEASE NOTE.

The next General Meeting will be held Wednesday 28th June. This for the election of committee members mentioned earlier in this "News".

CHANGE OF ADRESS

Mr & Mrs J Rush, 136 Coppin st, Richmond. 3121.
 Mr Clyde Mitchell, 5 Elata St, South Oakleigh. 3167 Home Tel 5703960
 Bus. Tel 5440633
 Mr Jopie Bodegraven, 2 Adam St, Nunawading 3131. Home Tel 8732938.
 Mr Christopher Milne, 7/35 Princess St, Seddon 3101.
 June Clay Creswick Hospital Creswick 3363. Bus Tel. 452002.
 Marilyn Blizzard Home Tel 3548474.
 Alwyn Bloom 4/36 Myrtle Gve, Reservoir. 3073 Home Tel 4789118
 Bus. Tel 471641
 Stewart G. Moroney 2 Hill St, Mt Beauty, 3699. Home Tel 057 572103
 John & Helen Fritze 2 Bow Crescent, East Camberwell 3124. John Bus Tel 6528120
 Helen Bus Tel 3475522 x 454
 Yvonne Chan 72 Alma Rd, St Kilda 3182. Home Tel. 3411773.
 Stuart Mattingley 12 James St., Pde, Gardenvale 3185.
 Henry & Marjorie Rokx 14 Templeton St, Wantirna 3152. Home Tel 2315540
 Henry Bus Tel 3976211 x244
 Marjorie Bus Tel 6049209
 James Baillie 12/56 Railway Rd, Carnegie. Home Tel 2110119
 Eileen Ayre Home Tel 900431 Bus Tel 5506444.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS.

Geoff Cope 11 Wood St, Nunawading 3131 Home Tel 8783071
 Bus Tel 5431122 x45
 Donald Weston 48 Osborne Avenue, Glen Iris 3146. Home Tel 205019
 Bus. Tel 3501222x 370
 Peter William Denny 4 Inverloch St, East Preston 3072. Home Tel 4786482
 Bus. Tel 673856
 Alison Steel 3/5 Creswick St, Hawthorn 3122 Home Tel 8193964
 Bus. Tel 634231
 Debbie Blaker 53 Riverside Ave, North Balwyn 3104 Home Tel 8594647.

Are we the club with amnesia? There must be few bushwalking clubs which cannot date their origins fairly precisely. We can't. Looking around the clubrooms, I can find Minute books going back as far as 1953. Nobody seems quite sure where the others before that are. Walks report forms go back into the 1940's. What should be done to preserve them? Is the first Wilky logbook (which goes back to the time the club acquired the lodge) safer up there than it would be elsewhere? Should we be taking steps (as the Mens Club is doing) to have our early records microfilmed? Where do you draw the dividing line between archival material and current records?

I think we need an Archives sub-committee to look at a whole range of questions like that. Accordingly, I have approached the Life Members of the club to see if they have any recommendations to make in this area. I hope we will see the establishment of such a sub-committee, so that at least detailed thought is given to the question, even if the best answer in the long run turns out to be to leave things exactly as they are.

Turning to matters of current concern, the LCC clearly regards our Alpine walking country as past history, and has recommended (perhaps not in so many words) that the Forestry Commission be given an open go to put through-routes across as much of it as possible. The Forestry Commission doesn't show any sign of actually needing to wait for the signal - a convenient bushfire has enabled them to complete the Catherine Saddle/Wonnangatta link this summer, for example. A last-ditch stand is vitally important. It is more important to send in a protest against the proposed recommendation than it was to send in a submission originally. These must be in by 12 June. It is also important that there be a good turn-out at a public meeting in the Lower Melbourne Town Hall, held by the CCV and the VNPA on Tuesday 23 May at 8.00 p.m. This will be attended by the Chairman of the LCC, who will be there to gauge the degree of public support for proposals alternative to those made by his Council.

----- W-J.

- NOTE TO THE EDITOR

Who is the phantom author? I have noticed lately that "News" has a half page or so of assorted waffle every month but the only clue to the author is the pseudonym "W-J". Who is the one who pontificates from so great a height? Let him come out into the open and sign his full name.

Concerned Member

CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

Phone: 329 5377

324 William Street,
Melbourne. 3000.

RE. LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL - ALPINE STUDY AREA - PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that the L.C.C. Proposed Recommendations for the Alps are the result of political pressures. Unless concerned people demonstrate their concern, the conservation possibilities of the Alps will be lost for all time.

Therefore you are requested to write letters yourself and to urge as many other people as possible to write also.

1. Send letters to either or all of:-

Your local members of State Parliament.
(The Victorian Environment Centre 329 5377 may be able to provide their names and addresses, providing you know your electorate.)

The Premier,
The Honourable R.J. Hamer, E.D., M.P., 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne, 3002.

The Minister for Conservation,
The Honourable W.A. Borthwick,
240 Victoria Parade,
East Melbourne, 3002.

The Minister for Tourism,
The Honourable D. Crozier,
228 Victoria Parade,
East Melbourne, 3002.

2. It is important that you express one or more of the following ideas IN YOUR OWN WORDS if possible. If not use some variation of the final letter in paragraph 3.

Grazing has been proven to be harmful to high country habitat by preventing vegetation regrowth, creating erosion hazards and spreading introduced weeds. Therefore its phasing-out should be accelerated.

The recommended mixed management by the Forests Commission of Victoria and the National Parks Service will create uses and pressures which will prevent the establishment of a world standard Alpine National Park for all time.

Little, if any, consideration has been given to the submissions made by conservationists.

The proposed Wilderness Area, in no way, meets the required standards for size, condition or viability.

The provision made for the timber industry is excessive. Alternative strategies should be considered with a view to restricting the impact of timber-getting, preserving more stands of representative timber and maintaining the existing saw-log industry.

Unless the opportunity to create a National Park is grasped now, Victoria's majestic and fragile Alpine Area will gradually deteriorate.

3. Sample letter.

I am concerned that the Land Conservation Council Proposed Recommendations for the Alpine Study Area recognize all existing uses, whether detrimental or otherwise, but fail to recognise genuine conservation values.

I urge that you reject the L.C.C. Proposals, which will prevent the creation of an Alpine National Park for all time, and that you support the concept of a major Alpine National Park and Wilderness Area under the National Parks Act.

4. Please remember that If you do nothing the area, that should be an Alpine National Park, could be over-run by bulldozers, deerhounds and undisciplined off road vehicles.
5. Any donation to help the Council in collecting and disseminating information on the Alps would be a great assistance.

Issued by the Conservation Council of Victoria,
324 William Street,
Melbourne, 3000. 329 5377,
in the interest of Victorians of the future.

I would like to thank all those who submitted Articles for "News" this month but Articles are still required for future months - News Convenor, C/- 53 Riverside Avenue, North Balwyn, 3104. Thanks must also go to our President Graham Wills-J. and Shelley Hayes for helping me type the magazine (away for two weeks at the time of magazine going to print).

A report on a Craclair Guided Walking Tour through Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park, Tasmania - A Walk for "softies", or a safe, enjoyable and pleasant way to see the Park?

Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park seems a popular venue for walks by members of the Melbourne Bushwalkers' Club. On the recommendation of Margaret Fryer, we decided to do the Craclair Tour starting on January 29 and finishing on February 5, 1978. Probably Craclair Tours are suitable for walkers who aren't all that experienced, have little of the appropriate equipment necessary for extended walks, are concerned with safety, but can't find experienced people with which to walk, don't want to be pack-horses and want to learn about the Park environment other than by trial and error, or reading a book.

Craclair Tours is owned by Eric Sargent who has been walking in the area since the nineteen forties. He is a carpenter by trade, but in the late Spring to Autumn each year, puts away his tools and leads walks through the Park, into Pine Valley and to Frenchman's Gap. His is a large family business, different members of his family taking varying degrees of interest in Craclair. This year Eric has been invited to lead a walk in Sikkim for Ausventure, one indication of his leadership capabilities and walking experience. These notes are based on observations made during our Tour through the Park.

Length of Tour: 8 days. 6 days of walking.

Cost from Melbourne: \$253 (not included: lunch on the first & last days; transport Airport to Devonport return, although Eric provided car transport for us each way, due largely to a Tasmanian Tourist Bureau blunder and Eric's kindness)

Accommodation: First night is usually spent at Waldheim Chalet but because of a TAA photographic long weekend, we were accommodated at the luxurious Pencil Pine Lodge. Last night was spent at the Cynthia Bay Lodge. One night was spent at the Waterfall Valley Hut because of the rain and cold weather and other nights were spent in tents (3 persons per tent).

Size of group: 11 in all; 3 leaders and 8 participants. This was considered a rather small group. An earlier tour comprised over 20 paying customers and proportionately more leaders.

The Leaders: Our tour was led by Stuart Sargent, a nephew of Eric who as leading another walk in Pine Valley. He had been to the Park with Eric several times as an assistant and had rover scout and outward bound school experience. Stuart was assisted by an American couple-Diana and Larry McGregor. The leaders carried all the food, the medical kit, the billies, and the tents. They cooked the meals and put up and pulled down the tents although they often received help from members of the group in preparing lunch and erecting and packing up tents. The leaders were also largely responsible for leading singing around the fire at night.

Equipment supplied to participants (if required)

Matches in a plastic bag; a small torch and batteries; a whistle; knife, fork and spoon; plate, bowl and mug; japara parka; waterproof overpants; good quality down sleeping bag and liner; a pack; plastic ground sheet; thin foam sleeping mat; gloves; army gaiters. We used our own packs, parkas and sleeping bag liners, and there were no objections, because of their good quality.

Weight carried by participants: Usually about 25 lbs. We carried about 26 lbs. as we included extra wet weather clothes--socks, woollen jackets, some toiletry luxuries and a camera which usually must be omitted when tents and food must be carried.

Transport: Devonport to Pencil Pine Lodge and/or Waldheim Chalet and Cynthia Bay to Devonport: Dennis Maxwell coaches (Wilmot, Tasmania, 7310) Dennis' small buses hired by other walking parties. Narcissus Hut, to Cynthia Bay: jet boat on Lake St. Clair.

Stages of the Walk: Day 1: Waldheim Chalet to Waterfall Valley Hut. Over 10.1 km.
Weather: wet and windy.

Day 2: Waterfall Valley Hut to Lake Windermere. Over 6.5 km.
Weather: Clearing - "Here comes the sun!"

Day 3: Lake Windermere to New Pelion Hut. Over 15.2 km.
Weather: Sunny and warm.

Day 4: New Pelion Hut to Pinestone Valley. Over 5.5 km.
Weather: Sunny, a little overcast by the afternoon, with haze.

Day 5: Pinestone Valley to Ducane Hut. Over 4.7 km.
Weather: Warm and sunny.

Day 6: Ducane Hut to Narcissus Hut. Over 13.9 km.
Weather: Windy, cold. Torrential rain by 5.00 p.m.

Sidetrips completed: 1. The planned climb to the top of Cradle Mountain was not attempted because of rain and strong winds.

2. Lake Will, Innes Falls, a circuit of Lake Windermere and some of the group ascended the ridge east of Lake Windermere.

3. To the Forth River Lookout.

4. A climb to the top of Mt. Ossa (1,617 m) the highest mountain in Tasmania.

5. A trip to see D'Alton, Boulder, Cathedral Fergusson and Hartnett Waterfalls.

These trips added much distance to the figures quoted .

Food on the track: Breakfast: Porridge (Cereal 1 day only), bacon sandwich toasted (baked beans and bacon on toast on 1 day only), tea or coffee.

Lunch: Plain or sweet biscuits with honey, vegemite, peanut butter, jam, cheese, sardines or sausage, tea or coffee.

Dinner: Soup made from cubes, chicken or beef. Either of farmhouse stew, chicken supreme, sweet and sour beans curry and chicken, usually with peas (1 night peas and carrots, 1 night beetroot) and potato (1 night: rice). Tea or coffee or drinking chocolate. Apricots or apple or prunes usually with custard. (Stews, vegetables, fruit all dehydrated).

Morning and afternoon tea: Orange segments. Energy sweets. Fruit saline. (Chocolate and raisins on top Mt. Ossa - a special treat!)

Some highlights of the trip:

1. The colours on Mt. Oakleigh and Cathedral.

2. Views from Mt. Ossa.

3. The Hartnett and Fergusson Falls.

4. The wildflowers which were in full bloom, except for the *richea scoparia* on the slopes of Mt. Doris which was past its best.

5. Seeing native cats at play on the shores of Lake Windermere.

6. Sing-a-longs at night led by Stuart and the reading of stories by Henry Lawson, around the camp fire.

To be avoided: 1. Leeches, mosquitoes, bush flies and snakes.

2. Scratches from heathland vegetation, which may cause allergies.

3. "Bogs"

4. Cheeky possums, especially at Ducane Hut. Infamous "Black Pete" worked all night to open a zipper on Stuart's pack and hit the fruit saline jack-pot.

5. Walkers who don't take skinny dips in mountain streams or lakes each evening and who leave their deodorant at home!

6. Any outhouses provided at huts - what a smell!

7. Forecasting the next day's weather - it's most often wrong!

8. New walking boots.

9. Participants who get up at 6 a.m. to clean their boots

10. Tents without a fly; thankfully Craclair tents had a fly and we remained dry!

Care must be taken in commenting on Dennis' bus driving ability in crossing unstable log bridges which sometimes lack a railing, in speaking with participants who develop blisters after only 4 hours of walking and in riding in an open jet boat across the rough waters of Lake St. Clair! There was the warm, friendly atmosphere of a bushwalking family, in our Cynthia Bay Hut, on our last night. Stuart told his Uncle of the trial and triumphs of our walk. Peter, accompanying himself on the ukulele, gave his first public recital of his song about our trip and the participants. Plans were made for a Melbourne reunion of the group, to view the slides. That we had enjoyed the walk with Craclair Tours seemed to be unanimous. However, perhaps even "softies" are bent on self torture during their walks and was indicated by the chorus of Peter's song:

I am an Eric Sargent mountain mule,
The pain I had was really rather cruel,
But when the day was done,
Just to have a bit of fun,
I plunged into an icy mountain pool!"

Inquiries about Craclair Tours can be made at the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, 256 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000 or letters addressed to Eric Sargent, Craclair Tours, P.O. Box 516, Devonport, Tasmania, 7310.

Marilyn Blizzard.

BLUE MOUNTAINS EASTER TRIP

It was 4.30 p.m. on Good Friday when our party of 6 began the walk through the hilly streets of Katoomba to the scenic railway, which catapulted us down to the walking track (people 40c packs 10c) Before dark, space for 3 tents was found close to a trickle of clear water.

Harold spread around 2 bottles of 'Easter cheer' and returned the empties to civilization next morning. Then we started on the track around Malait Point, pausing to admire and photograph pink and orange rocks on the way. Morning tea and a side trip to the rocky outcrop known as the Ruined Castle coincided with brown and white striped leeches and a transistorized threesome who couldn't tell us the weather forecast! Shortly afterwards we strayed on to a well defined no-through track which eventually petered out and Harold led a scramble up the nearest summit which was enlivened by the dislodging of a few rocks, not to say people.

Back on the track we continued on in mist and finally light drizzle with no views to compensate for our efforts. Throughout the walk we found an excellent variety of wildflowers. A rather tired party camped by a stream on Mt. Solitary a mile or so west of The Col. Sporadic showers became a downpour by 10.00 and all retired.

Our fire-lighter informed the wakeful at 5.30 a.m. that it would be a good sunrise, and at 6.00 a.m. from huge rocks overlooking a sheer drop into the Jamison Valley, the sunrise was 'not bad', and better still there was no mist in the valley. Our leader complained of not being called for the sunrise, so we determined to do better next time.

We moved onward to the Col. revelling in blue sky, sunshine, and the excellent view from the lookout. Lengthy conferences were then held as to the best way to get down from our great height (2600 feet) to the road at 1200 ft. On the advice of Sydney walkers and in the company of Vin Mead (MBW) his son and grandson, we took the initially steep track on the northside of The Col, and continued down the ridge.

The 4 WD track east afforded good views of the Kedumba Pass. A muddy Kedumba creek looked deeper than it was, and those across enjoyed the spectacle of a complete bush wardrobe as one member halfway over decided to search for more suitable footwear.

We continued on the road, climbing gradually towards the Three Sisters. Our roadside camp that night was on beautiful green grass but the wood took hours to dry enough for a cooking fire. For an hour before midnight our punster stopped punning to indulge in some halfway serious discussion.

On Monday the road bash back seemed to pass very quickly and we camped on the road obviously below Echo Point where the tourists were still testing their skills.

Tuesday morning's sunrise seemed O.K. but Harold didn't want to be woken up. The brief bushbash up to the Giant Stairway was little preparation for the 1000 steps (really 934) which took 12-28 minutes, depending on fitness. The rest of the day was spent on the Katoomba cliff tracks, made during the Depression. Highlights were the Bridal Veil Falls and Taiapan Rock ('a typin' error", said our punster) and buying goodies for an all night binge on the train.

Thanks Harold

A.W.T.8 Mt. Wills-Tom Groggin, Easter Thursday March 23-28

"I do not ask to see the distant scene - one step enough for me."

This walk, led by Michael Griffin, who had already spent fourteen days solo on the track before we met up with him on the Razorback spur of Mt. Wills at 8.30 a.m. Good Friday 24th April, was graded hard. Only nine participants were in the transit van again kindly driven by Hugh Duncan, accompanied by one Leonie, comprised largely of those who were to complete the entire (but one - due to adverse conditions) Alpine Track project. With Graham Wills-Johnson as de facto leader, we had a very speedy and comfortable trip up through Wodonga and along the Omeo Highway, arriving at Lightning Creek by one o'clock under a calm and starry sky amid the balmy pre-scents of cow dung. A very smooth beginning - the only signs of the forthcoming protracted struggle being the surreptitious but determined efforts of two in transit to keep the van windows open for a supply of oxygen to fit us for the arduous or hard test ahead.

Michael stood outside the hut cool, tall and slim, looking every inch a much reduced

leader; he also looked remarkably cheerful especially when Bob Douglas handed him a bag of mixed goodies and nutrients, but spoiled the whole effect when he expressed the hope that we were all fit. He didn't even have the grace to say grace, but indicating that we were about to receive 85 odd miles, without even a "hey normie normie" we were off at a brisk pace through about forty metres of scrub on to a wide open springy track, pleasantly moist after nine days of recent rain (out of Michael's fourteen) down the long trail to Tom Groggin, ENE on the banks of the Murray.

We were on the Benambra map by lunchtime, after over three and a half hours' walking, brisk confidence being slowly but surely replaced by a steady determination to last the day, minor speed contests and the fun-run mentality giving place to a testy disapproval of insensate pacemaking (well by some if not by others). Mount Cooper had been easily dispatched, and according to the signs, Mount Martin was scaled before it even existed; but for those who had too lightly disregarded their own contours or ignored those on the map the worst was to come, an unnamed non-existent hill which went relentlessly up and up and down and up. This sorted out the men and Christina from the boys, as did the long descent down to Yankee Point on the Mitta Mitta.. another three and a half miles not always too gently graded .. and that night at our campsite on the sandy banks of the turbulent waters of the Mitta Mitta if the truth be told, there were some faint and fluttering hearts, wondering what walking was all about, if perhaps we shouldn't have come, if God damnit Alex Stirkul mightn't have been right after all.. 21 miles since 9.00 a.m. .. full packs .. four more days of it... and as the fiendish and muddy waters bubbled away even Spencer's normally cheerful and ebullient tones were silenced.. but a surfeit of sore feet, cramped thighs and clamouring calves sounded their own paean from pain as Christina, ever bright and cheerful administered a wholly Easter comfort in the form of chocolate liqueurs. "If the way be dreary.. let not faithless fears overtake us". All that nonsense was forgotten next morning as we made a punctual 7.30 start, fording the river - a bad mistake, as we were to find out on a FCV notice some ten miles later, which should have proved impossible (impassable? sorry) and making our way on a pleasant track, liberally beshrewed with mouldy blackberries, leading about five hundred feet to well graded jeep track through and beyond Eustace' Gap. With a little racing and much more halting for some now luscious and succulent blackberries the party was beginning to spread somewhat and after a generous 1½ hr. lunch break this side of Wheeler Gibbo where Simon could find no water - a general pattern where we proceeded at a steadier pace in a close knit group which led to some intermittent singing (wish he had put his mitten on his mug) intelligent repartee, and one highly offensive suggestion that there might be a relationship between religion and morality or was it music? This was quickly nipped in the bud, but did not prevent our seeing our fifth black topped yellow bellied snake in two days. Don't believe that stuff about their running away - the first and last seen definitely did not respond to our polite and well meant conversational ploys and hung around the track with head up for quite some time. Maybe it was the humidity that brought them out, but whatever the reason we didn't see that lot again for the rest of the walk. We did see Hugh shortly in the van and three members instantly lost status by plonking therein their packs, but we were soon at camp anyway at a pleasant clearing near Sassafras Gap where we were welcomed not only by Hugh who helped get us water but by a hut some campers and some horses who in mockery of us did a hobble-dance.. despite the same distance 21 miles, we had spent a relatively easy day through open forest, but no sooner had we camped and begun a fire than the rain came pelting down the sky closed in, and an early night was the order of the day, so to speak. One member spent a dire night, eavesdropping some claimed, but with nothing to lose, on the leader's challenge he decided to stick it out. The rest of the party was in good nick by now and only three days to go.

"Rest comes at length though life be long and dreary.."

An 8.30(!) start, cool and cloudy, emus sighted, up Mt. Sassafras an almost mystical mist and then the song of lyrebirds preceding the sight of them (the sight of them!) running up the branches of the trees, and a fire for lunch by a flowing creek and an ample supply of blackberries meant an agreeable morning's walk. The afternoon, again on an open track saw the quaint and gnarled snowy gums give place to tall towering timber which tried to shelter us as we fairly rapidly made our way up to the dam and the nearby campsite, but the rain again in the last half hour came fairly pelting down and Michael did well to light a fire aided and abetted by firelighters, dry scrub and the like, without which we would have spent a miserable night, as the freeze dried tents were to attest next morning. Comfort, cheer, cooking facilities and clothes drying facilities were thus provided; unfortunately M.G. neglected to dry his own sleeping bag and was in a daunting if not dauntless mood on rising on the morn.

"Till morning's joy shall end the night of weeping..."

Anticipating his formidable mood, most were off to an early start, even before seven,

this was to be a 25 mile day, including Mt. Pinnabar. GwJ was off soon to keep his dogs cool, Spencer who had long since discarded computerising with the former, was away, so too was steady reliable Phillip Taylor, indeed virtually all jumped the gun to enjoy bracing morning of exhilarating walking .. a brisk climb up Gibbo for some lovely views, and then on to Pinnabar on a grassy almost unused but open track which for gentle greens, open glades and the superb scenery of the Kosciusko range, was a photographer's delight, and they were all busy at it. What a feast, because with tents dried out at morning tea, the sun pouring down from a gloriously clear sky, all was propitious for a triumphant afternoon, especially after we had all speedily devoured Mt. Pinnabar (without packs) and its magnificent panoramic view, Benambra nearby, Bogong far away, the Kosciusko range, Pilot and Cobberas to the south etc.

"..... since upon morn such awful night could rise!"

The best laid schemes .. in the afternoon we set off with light hearts if heavier feet, but with the assured wisdom of the walk planner and the experience of Philip Coleman to guide us, not to mention Michael's fecundity in contingency plans, it soon became clear that we were in for an afternoon of it. The wrong turnoff (by some), the pleasant glade and foot track yielding to stony scrubby ill marked underfoot diabolic soon or rather at length had us behind schedule for water at the much desired tank, and solid low profile (expert navigator) Bill Mett. led an early group to set up camp for those who were variously tripping, sore wounded; hey hey... the others a little in arrears were assured that they'd get to camp by moonlight, but there was no moonlight and Hell did bar the way. So the two groups were reunited, and it was worth it, for the morning walk to the creek, which we reached by 7.30 repaid all our tribulations of the night before: birdsong accompanied our final egress from the foul Mt. Hermit, big grey kangaroos bounded out of the foreground as we approached the flats near Tom Groggin and we all enjoyed our breakfast more for our morning descent. Michael had done well; with the variety of personalities, walking styles and paces he had got us there on time, with the astutely timed promise of ice-cream for just such an aug feat, which determined us all to make him pay for the rigours of the walk. Even the mushroomers, led by everfresh Simon and Bob didn't slacken pace to let the prospect fade. So this vile man did one more last abject "When we reach the cold dark river, bid us tremble not nor fear." Having found a perfectly good bridge, and road to lead us to the bus, he took us back on the supposed track so that we had to - I knew it - ford the fast flowing river, before we could enjoy the comfort of the van but the cool shock of the Murray water was possibly the greatest thrill of the trip. Most of us had a dip, and it was glorious.

"Far over yon horizon rise the city towers .. that fair home is ours".

Well the President paid a timely and brief tribute to Hugh for his invaluable van and the trip back was unremarkable. The icecream promise was honoured in full; a fine precedent, and from the one who most merited the icecream but come to think of it I did give him 30c worth of biscuits and well, some chattered and some read and some bantered and some snoozed but a most tender scene unfolded as two mellow walkers sat side by side in the van and not a word or sound of discord or strife from either of them ... until someone queried Spencer's age and the ensuing bellow of protest woke the greying Wills to normal dynamism and as we reached Melbourne all was back to normal again.

"And as things have been, they remain." You've got your rocks and your trees and your scrub.
