



The NEWS

of the
MELBOURNE BUSHWALKERS INC.

NOVEMBER 1995

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Sun 19 Nov. Pennyroyal Falls - Deans Marsh
Walk to be led by Jean Giese & Brian Crouch

Please note that the Bus will leave at 0830,
not 0900 as in the October NEWS
Apologies from the Editor

Walks for December

1-3	Stronach's Camp - Baw Baw Plateau
Sat 2	Moorabbin Lake & Parklands
Sun 3	Mt Tugwell - Mt Bride - Groom Hill
8-10	Mt Buffalo Base Camp
Sun 10	Anakie Gorge - Steiglitz
Wed 13	Marysville Lookouts - Steavensons Falls
15-17	N. W. Spur - Mt Feathertop - Bon Accord
Sun 17	Mt Donna Buang - Cement Creek

Christmas Walks

22-31	Honeysuckle Creek - Kiandra
26-31	Cave Creek - Kiandra
26-1	Wallace's Base Camp - Bogong N.P.
Sun 31	Tanglefoot Track - Mt St Leonard

No Leaders - No Walks!

At the moment I have had no volunteers to lead the Sunday walk on January 28. This is the Australia Day Weekend. The walk, if it goes, is to Bunyip State Forest, but that could be changed. Please contact me if you can help.

Alan Miller

Advance Notice

Christmas Party in the Clubrooms Wednesday 20 December at 1900

Come and catch up with people you may not have seen for some time. There will be wine & non-alcoholic drinks available. Please bring a plate of something to share.

Mark it in your diaries now.

Walhalla Base Camp (in Hostel)
Australia Day Weekend - 25 - 28 January 1996
Leader Brian Crouch - see Page 6

Survey of Feral Cattle in the Baw Baw National Park

A cooperative effort is being planned for bushwalkers to survey (on the 17th March 1996) the impact of feral cattle in the Baw Baw National Park. We need to know as early as possible the numbers of Bushies who would be willing to take part in this exercise. Contact Stephen Rowlands or myself if you are interested or want more information.

Bill Metzthen

The various Bushwalking & Outdoor Gear shops in Melbourne are combining to put on a
Lightweight Tent Display,
in the Edinburgh Gardens, in Fitzroy (Melway map 44, B1) on
Sunday 3rd December 1995.
I think it is from about 1000

No Social Notices as we have lost our energetic Social Secretary (*see Presidents Prose*).
We are looking for a new Social Secretary -
could that be you?

From the Editor

Daylight Saving is here at last! I really enjoy this time of year, when I can make good use of the extra daylight in the evening to do some gardening. I also feel I haven't wasted the whole day at work!

Daylight Saving also gives us a bit more time for our walks, particularly the Sunday walks. And after the Sunday walk you can enjoy the evening at the Southbank restaurants & outdoor eating areas.

As mentioned in the President's Prose, there will be some vacancies on the Committee next year. I will have been NEWS Editor for 2 years by February next and I would like to hand over to someone else. You don't have to be a great typist - I am still a two finger typist! You just have to have access to a computer with a good word processing package and a laser printer. I prepare The NEWS in MS Word for Windows ver. 2.1, and have set it up with templates and autotext to make the job easier. I print the original pages on the laser printer at work and these are then sent to our Printer via courier, and the collated & stapled NEWS's are dropped off at the Clubrooms, where members help fold & label them for posting.

So if you would like an interesting job, where you get advance notice of good walks and other Club news, here is the job for you.

Bob Steel

The NEWS is the official newsletter of the Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc. and is published monthly. Edited by Bob Steel. Articles, walk reports, poems, snippets of news, reports of new gear, book reviews, letters "to the Editor", advertisements, etc are always welcome. The Editor reserves the right to edit articles, contributions, letters etc submitted for publication, where space, clarity, propriety, etc dictates. and to maintain editorial consistency

Please note that articles for **The NEWS** may be put in the

Red Box in the clubrooms or mailed to me,
Bob Steel, at P.O. Box 157, Ringwood, 3134
or faxed to me on 871 1878

Advertising Rates

1/4 Page 1 Issue-\$20; 3 Issues-\$50; 12 Issues (1 year)-\$180

1/2 Page 1 Issue-\$30; 3 Issues-\$75; 12 issues-\$270

Full Page 1 issues-\$50; 3 issues-\$125; 12 issues-\$450

Only advertisements directly relating to bushwalking will be accepted (ie, gear, maps, trips, tours, etc)

Members Ads - FREE

Closing Date for **DECEMBER 1995 News**
is **Wednesday 29th NOVEMBER 1995.**

Meetings are held in the Clubrooms, MacKenzie St., Melbourne (rear of the Royal Horticultural Society building) on **WEDNESDAY** Evenings between 7.00pm and 9.00pm.

Visitors are always welcome.

President's Prose

It was with regret that I accepted Nancy Belyea's resignation because her student visa expired at the end of October, and she had to return to Canada.

Nancy was a very energetic Social Secretary and her warm & friendly personality will be missed by all the Bushies. We wish her well.

Nancy's departure has left a vacancy on the Committee so if anyone is interested in becoming more involved with the running of the Club, please see me or one of the Committee members.

There will be a few definite vacancies on the Committee next year. Walks Secretary, Assistant Walks Secretary, Treasurer and NEWS Editor are all positions that will become vacant, so have a think about whether you would like to do something more for the Club and take on one of these roles. All the Committee have been writing their Job Descriptions, so if you want to know more about what is involved with any of these positions, talk to Bill, Alan, William or Bob (See *From the Editor* re NEWS).

At the November Committee meeting we discussed what we would do with the interest accrued from the \$20 000 fund ear-marked for Conservation. This year we have decided to support the Victorian Conservation Trust and the Australian Alpine Heritage Trust. Our aim is to support something that would help to ensure the preservation of the areas we walk in. (See page 6 for more information.

The Leader's Day was great fun and enjoyed by all who attended. The day began with a talk by Jean Giese about what to keep in mind when leading a walk. Then 4 leaders worked out some great walks during which various scenarios took place. The acting ability of our members was admired - I couldn't work out whether the incidents were real or not - and some interesting discussion took place.

The day ended with a discussion of the incidents, chaired by Derrick Brown and Bill Metzenthén & Alan Miller outlined the Club's expectations of Leaders. Leaders have a big responsibility and have to cope with all sorts of problems and this day helped to develop & fine tune leader's skills. It was also a lot of fun. Don't miss the next one!

Janet Norman

General correspondence should be directed to:
The Secretary, Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc.
PO Box 1751Q, MELBOURNE 3001

Previews for December Day Walks

Saturday 2 Dec.
Easy

**MOORABBIN LAKE
and PARKLANDS**

Leader: **Athol Schafer**
 Transport: **Train - MEET under the clocks at
Flinders St Station at 1300 (1 pm)**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **15 kms**
 Expected time of return: **1700**
 Approx length of walk: **5 kms**
 Map Reference: **Melway maps 76 & 77**

Moorabbin streets sprawl over what was mostly market gardens and sand hump country up to the early 1950's; but still enough open space left for a pleasant afternoon's ramble where once a 23 year old market gardener, one Thomas Bent, collected the shire rates at the beginning of his political career, finally gaining the Premiership of Victoria. This walk starts at Moorabbin station at about 1.50 pm. If a fine day, bring a picnic afternoon tea.

Sunday 3 Dec **MT TUGWELL - MT BRIDE**
 Easy/medium & Medium **- GROOM HILL**

Leaders: **Brian Crouch & Sue Ralston**
 Transport: **Bus at 9.00 am from South
Bank Boulevard**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **77 kms**
 Expected time of return: **1900**
 Area: **south of Warburton**
 Approx length of walks: **both c. 16 kms**
 Map Reference: **Gladysdale & Ada River 1:25 000**

This is a lovely peaceful area in State Forest, with varying scenery from tree-fern gullies to tall mountain ash forests. There are some lovely views, though unfortunately none from the hard-earned tree-covered peaks. Lyrebirds and an echidna were seen at close range on the preview. Although both walks are virtually all on tracks, some parts on the medium walk are heavily overgrown, with one particularly interesting section where we battle with mint bush for twenty minutes or so (leading to an improvement in the normal bus aroma on the way home!). Both walks involve some quite steep climbs, with more on the medium walk (a total ascent of 1 100 metres), but there is respite in some flat areas and steep downhill!

The Easy-medium walk will start on the Old Warburton Road, south of Warburton, and climb gradually around Mt Tugwell to reach the top of Mt Bride. We walk through mixed forest with some views through the trees. The area is rugged and involves considerable climbing (i.e. 500 m. ascent to reach Mt Bride. We then descend on a S.E. bearing before

crossing Big Pats Creek, passing through the Ezard Mill site, and continue S.E. on the Upper Yarra Walking Track to end at Starling's Gap. A challenging walk through beautiful bush which is not seen by many people. The Medium walk begins on Big Pats Track and follows a route to Groom Hill, Mt Bride (900m.), and, as with the easy/medium group, along Ezard Spur & Mortimore Track to Starling's Gap.

Sunday 10 Dec
Easy & E/Medium

**ANAKIE GORGE
- STEIGLITZ**

Leaders: **Alan Miller & Julie Ralph**
 Transport: **Bus at 9.00 am from South
Bank Boulevard**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **73 kms**
 Expected time of return: **1830**
 Area: **in the Brisbane Ranges (N. of Geelong)**
 Approx length of walks: **13 & 16 kms**
 Map Reference: **Staughton Vale & Eclipse
Creek 1:25 000**

Koalas can almost be guaranteed in Anakie Gorge and the rosellas at Stony Creek Picnic Area can be hand-fed. Both walks will be on either walking tracks or dirt roads, except for a short section along the Ballan-Geelong Road. This is forced upon us by the Geelong Water Board which allows large numbers of kangaroos to pollute its lower Stony Creek reservoir, but cannot tolerate bushwalkers! The walks and at the historic gold mining town of Steiglitz, where gold was found in the 1850's. The Museum (in the old Court House) closes at 1600, so we shall try to be there in time.

Wed. 13 Dec
Easy/medium

**MARYSVILLE LOOKOUTS
STEAVENTSON FALLS**

Leader: **Jean Giese**
 Transport: **Private**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **97 kms**
 Expected time of return: **1800**
 Approx length of walk: **18 kms**
 Map Reference: **Outdoor Leisure Map
Marysville-Lake Mountain**

It's lovely around Marysville. We will be walking on tracks through forest & up to three lookouts, plus Steavenson Falls. There will be some steep ascents and descents to help our cardio-vascular systems and we should get some rewarding views.

**MEET at 9 Albert Crescent, Surrey Hills at 8.30 am
OR in Marysville on Falls Rd. near the oval at 10 am.**

Previews for December Day Walks continued

Sunday 17 Dec	MT DONNA BUANG
Easy/medium & Medium	CEMENT CREEK

Leaders: Margaret Borden & Stuart Mann
 Transport: Bus at 9.00 am from South Bank Boulevard
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: 86 kms
 Expected time of return: 1930
 Area: near Warburton
 Approx length of walks: 11.5 & 15 kms
 Map Reference: Juliet South 1:25 000

Both walks will start from Cement Creek Reserve car park with the Easy/medium group heading in an easterly & northerly direction up c. 320m to Boobyalla Saddle with its magnificent mountain ash, lovely beech trees & ferns. From there up the Boobyalla track for a further 260m climb to Mt Donna Buang. On a fine day a climb up the fire tower will be rewarding with its mountain views. Then down a walking track to the bus at Ten Mile Turntable & for those with extra energy the option of a further 2½ kms to Mt Victoria.

The Medium group will go up the Cement Creek track for c. 2½ kms (460m ascent) & from there to Mt Donna Buang for lunch. If it is fine then south along the bitumen to the start of a rather rugged walking track south for 660m descent over c.2½ kms, then east over a deteriorating track to a short & very tough bush bash to another walking track for a further 340m descent to Warburton. It is suggested the Medium walk should only be undertaken if you are experienced and fit as it is hard in places and for timing reasons will be relatively fast - it is also suggested that shorts will not offer the protection needed. (If the day is wet, a shorter, easier option will be offered).

Sunday 31 Dec	TANGLEFOOT TRACK -
Easy & Easy/medium	MT ST LEONARD

Leader: Brian Crouch
 Transport: Private
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: 85 kms
 Expected time of return: 1830
 Area: north of Healesville

More details in the December NEWS. This walk will be private transport and will depend on interest, considering it is in the Christmas-New Year period. However, if you are not going away, and want a walk, this would be good. Excellent views from Mt St Leonard, as well as magnificent mountain ash forest around the Monda track & Mt Tanglefoot

Members Free Ad

For Sale

One Fairydown Polar Plus Jacket in aqua with navy trim. Front zipper with high collar. Size small, good condition.

Rosemary Cotter on

after 1930

New Members

Aresh FRASER

Marika JAGOW

Alan IDE

Jane BENNIE

Tony IREMONGER

Kylie BARLOW

Jane WILSON

Barbara NANKERVIS

Changes to Members Information

Nancy BELYEA

Barbara WEISS

Cameron McMILLAN

Kuninori SHIMBO

Isabel ROBINSON

Previews for December Weekend & Pack-Carry Walks

1-3 Dec Easy/medium	STRONACH'S CAMP - Mt ST GWINEAR
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Leader: **Pearson Cresswell**
 Transport: **Private**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **153 kms**
 Expected time of return: **c. 1900, Sunday**
 Area: **Baw Baw Plateau**
 Approx length of walk: **20-25 kms**
 Map Reference: **Matlock 1:100 000**

This walk will follow the Alpine Walking Track from Stronachs Camp at the northern end of the Baw Baw Plateau, to Mt St Gwinear. Camp on Saturday night will be somewhere in the vicinity of Mt Whitelaw. I am looking forward to a pleasant stroll through the alpine country with some side trips if time permits.

8-10 Dec. Easy/medium	MT BUFFALO BASE CAMP
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Leader: **Max Casley**
 Transport: **Private - Mini bus**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **322 kms**
 Expected time of return: **late Sunday evening**
 Approx length of walk: **various day walks**
 Map Reference: **Eurobin & Buckland 1:25 000,**
also Buffalo NP maps by Lawford
& Algona

Mt Buffalo National Park has impressive granite rock formations and gorges, waterfalls, snowgrass plains, snow gums, wildflowers and good views across the valleys to distant Alpine areas. We will camp at Lake Catani and do day walks each day. We will be having a camp-fire (unless Total Fire Ban) but will need to bring or buy our firewood. The camping ground has toilets and hot showers. We will travel by mini-bus leaving Melbourne Friday, probably c. 1700. We will have a meal break on the way, probably at Benalla. Cost will be \$30, including transport and camping fees and firewood. Please book early and pay the full amount (\$30). Make cheques payable to Melbourne Bushwalkers Inc.

15-17 Medium/hard	NORTH WEST SPUR - MT FEATHERTOP
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Leader: **Ralph Blake**
 Transport: **Private**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **332 kms**
 Expected time of return: **Late Sunday night**
 Area: **near Harrierville**
 Approx length of walk: **30 kms**

Map Reference: **Outdoor Leisure Map - Bogong Alpine area**

On Saturday we will ascend steeply to Mt Feathertop via the North-west Spur, which starts c. 5 kms north of Harrierville. Packs will be left at the top of the North-west spur track & we will do a side trip to the summit of Mt Feathertop. Saturday night camp will be on the Razorback at a pleasant spot just below Twin Knobs. Water will need to be carried from a spring, enroute below the summit of Mt Feathertop.

On Sunday we will continue along the Razorback to the Big Dipper, and then down the Bon Accord Spur to Harrierville.

Christmas Walks

22-31 December Medium	HONEYSUCKLE CREEK - KIANDRA
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Leader: **Bill Metzenthon**
 Transport: **Private**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **c. 550 kms**
 Area: **Snowy Mountains, NSW**
 Approx length of walk: **c. 92 kms**
 Map Reference: **(see Leader for details)**

Honeysuckle Creek is an old site of a space tracking station in the A.C.T., and is also the end of the Australian Alps Walking Track. This walk follows the track through sub-alpine country to the old gold-fields at Kiandra.

A highlight of the walk is a side trip to Bimberi Peak, which is on the border of the A.C.T. and I have been told that at 1913m it is the highest point in the A.C.T. A full day will be allowed to explore the Blue Waterholes area with its caves and historical homestead. We are due to join up with Lloyd's walkers on that day.

I intend to do this trip at a reasonably leisurely pace, and we won't climb more than 500 metres with a pack over any day, so the main problem for walkers will be the necessary weight of food which must be carried (at least for the first few days!). However, in return for the pace, be prepared for some days with an early start.

The lowest point is about 900 metres a.s.l. and most of the walk is above 1200 m, so be prepared for any weather. Bring adequate clothing etc for conditions ranging from a heat wave to a blizzard. Bring a stove, although we may have a fire on some days.

Previews for Xmas Walks continued.

Brian Crouch

26-31 Dec	CAVE CREEK - KIANDRA
Medium	

Leader: **Lloyd Young**
 Transport: **Private**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **c. 550 kms**
 Area: **Brindabellas - Snowy Mtns, NSW**

Should be an interesting walk in the northern Snowy Mountains, starting at Cave Creek in the Brindabellas, then along the high tops to Kiandra. More information in December NEWS, or see leader in Clubrooms. Editor.

26 Dec - 1 Jan	WALLACE'S BASE CAMP
Easy	
Bogong High Plains	

Leader: **Alan Miller**
 Transport: **Private**
 Approx. Distance from Melbourne: **450 kms**
 Area: **Bogong National Park**
 Approx length of walk: **Various lengths**
 Map Reference: **Outdoor Leisure Map Bogong Alpine Area**

We will camp between Wallace's Hut and the Aqueduct, fairly close to Wilkinson Lodge. The walk in from the cars is nearly 1 km, so bear this in mind when deciding whether to bring chairs, tables, eskies and the kitchen sink. A variety of day walks will be arranged across the Bogong High Plains.

Advance Notice of Walhalla Base Camp, Australia
Day weekend - 26 - 28 January 1996.

I will provide more details in the December NEWS, however I have already had some enquiries and bookings. So here is some preliminary info on the weekend's activities.

Following the success of last year's visit, I am planning the 1996 event to be three days of walks of different grades and free time for rest & recreation. The Tisdall Hostel is quite comfortable and has adequate facilities, and is located centrally in Walhalla township. From Walhalla we have lots of options for walks either into the alpine areas or closer around Walhalla which is a beautiful historic gold mining area. We may explore some gold mining sites, swim in the nearby Thompson River, and walk along part of the Alpine Walking Track. (See October NEWS). My plan is to be in Walhalla on Thursday night (25 Jan.) and stay until Sunday afternoon (28 Jan.) The hostel accommodates 32 people in dormitory facilities and the cost will be approx. \$10 per person per night. Book early as 32 is the absolute limit.

Committee Notes

Treasurer for October 1995

Opening Balance	54 396.66
Month's Receipts	2 615.64
Month's Payments	2 298.48
Closing Balance	54 710.82

Walks Secretary - Walks for September

Day Walks - 4, with ave of 39 (cf. 43¼ in Sep 1994)
 W/end walks - 3 Pack-carry, ave of 11.3
 Base Camp - 1 with 9 people
 Wed & Dandenong walks - 2 with ave of 14
 Broadford to Yea Run with 4 (2 runners)
 Two ski trips were cancelled

Membership Statistics:

Life	11
Honorary	10
Singles	336
Couples	96 (= 2x 48)
Total	453

Wilky Work Party on November 10 - 12

Committee Duty Roster

8 Nov	Peter & Peter
15 Nov	Doug & Jean
22 Nov	Janet & Lloyd
29 Nov	Pearson & Stephen
6 Dec	Peter & Janet

Conservation Donation

The Committee decided to donate the interest money from the special term deposit to conservation causes (mentioned in the President's Column). \$1 650 will go to the Victorian Conservation Trust. We are directing that the money be used to help buy land either in the Grampians or Alpine areas. We are also giving \$200 to the Alps Word Heritage proposal (through the VNPA). This is perceived to be helping Bushwalkers & the areas in which we walk.

MARVELLOUS MEADERINGS AT MOOTWINGEE, MENINDEE AND MUNGO

Spring was a great time for 10 of us to head for 2 weeks exploring outback N.S.W. The drought had partly broken - a thin layer of green sprinkled with flowers lay over the red earth. But the rains came again closing the dirt road north of Broken Hill and sending us on the bitumen to the mining ghost town of Silverton to camp in a recreation ground. At Hattah the night before we had met Janet and Keith heading for the Flinders Ranges. At Silverton they were also here, stuck like us till the roads opened.

An evening drink in the film-famous Silverton Pub was a pleasant interlude from the cold wind. Next day an "Historic Walk" through the town led us past old ruins and out into the western hills, outliers of the rugged Barrier Range to the north and viewpoint over the vast flat Mundi Mundi plain stretching to the South Australian border. Old churches and other buildings now house art galleries and tourists are everywhere. Gathering us all together near a turkey pen Sylvia met her match. "What I said was ... GOBBLE, GOBBLE, GOBBLE said a turkey very loudly. We all fell about in uproarious and uncontrollable laughter. Recovering, we found this translated as "The road north is now open".

Mootwingee - "a place of green grass and waterholes" - is a national park spanning the low Byanguano Range. Red rounded hills cut by many creeks into rugged little gorges. Cool waterholes, some permanent and some only filled after rain, shaded by steep cliffs and gums. It was a special place for the aborigines. They camped on the plain near the ranges and went to the waterholes for water and to catch the game that came to drink. Their important happenings were recorded in ochre on the large red rock overhangs and by carving on rock slabs.

Mutawinji Historic Site is rich in this art. An area of several square kilometres is fenced off and managed by the aborigines themselves. Our Aboriginal guides told fascinating stories of the art on the rocks, telling us the meaning as far as they know, of the stencilled hands and lizards, the paintings of boomerangs and emu and kangaroo tracks, and explaining the human and animal forms carved out of the hard rock by tapping with stone "chisels". We learned how a cooking oven worked and saw remnants scattered on the ground of the termite rocks that formed the heated base of the oven and bones and egg shell of emus and other animals that were eaten.

It is wonderful walking country. The rocky slopes are easily negotiated and not high and the undulating tops are full of interest. We had permission to camp for two nights away from the public camping ground but the ranger could not say where we might find water. On

climbing around the large overhangs in Ampitheatre Gorge we discovered many paintings and, after following the sandy creek bed up, found a waterhole to camp by and fresh drinking water trickling over a rock face in a side creek. Enchanting melodious bird calls echoed in the narrow valley and a willy wagtail woke us at 2am with its carolling!

A day walk out onto the top of the range from this creek gave the navigators a good test as our map was 1:100,000. Of course it was essential to find our way back to camp and water and once on the broad flat top we needed a compass. It was easy walking over open ground and through mulga scrub and other shrubs new to us, but very drying as the red earth and rocks reflected the 30°C heat. The upper reaches of creeks were a series of gentle rock sheets and little waterholes, slowly drying out since the last rain. The birds among us were kept busy with the binoculars and books. Unfortunately goats are everywhere, eating the vegetation and fouling the water, even wearing out the paintings by rubbing against them as they shelter in the caves.

After six days in this fascinating range we came away knowing we had only touched the outside edge and there was so much more to see.

Stocking up on food at Broken Hill we headed south east to Menindee on the Darling River and downriver to Kinchega National Park. It protects an area of large lakes, the river and its floodplain and is centred on old Kinchega Station, the only buildings now left being the Shearers' Quarters which house the Park Headquarters plus accommodation and the huge historic woolshed. This year the lakes were nearly dry, significant rain not having fallen for 5 years. Our beachfront campsite with swimming was not available, so we opted for the river bank, a grave mistake as it turned out, but what could be nicer than a view of the mighty Darling flowing grey at the bottom of its grey trench, and to set up one's tent on a thick carpet of brown leaves under gigantic river red gums or on a sandy bank in the trench by the river's edge.

"Come to the BUSH DANCE at Kinchega" we had read on a poster at Mootwingee. We did. And so did the Mootwingee National Park aboriginal staff we had met. And so did "Bushfire", a band from Mildura complete with outdoor stage, and so did a caterer from Mildura who set up a huge marquee and kitchen. The music was excellent but the dance floor was tanbark laid on the red dirt and rather difficult to negotiate. Nevertheless, in spite of this and Darren the Drunk, it was great fun. The Melbourne Bushies were beginning to make their mark.

MARVELLOUS MEADERINGS AT MOOTWINGEE, MENINDEE AND MUNGO

Sylvia couldn't help telling the band how to run a progressive polka. And we were getting a reputation among park staff for asking lots of questions.

Next day, Dot, an almost fullblood Aboriginal lady, took us out to a burial ground in the sandhills between the lakes. There is nothing to be seen now except an eroded sandy landscape dotted with shrubs and plants, but underneath, untouched, lie the bones of Dot's ancestors. Fascinated, we listened to her descriptions of burial methods and the uses of the plants growing nearby. The atmosphere in that sunny windswept place was timeless and eerie, and when she told us that explorer Major Mitchell's men had massacred some of her tribespeople on the sandy peninsular beyond, we felt as if their ghosts were watching. It was a sobering and thought-provoking experience.

We had just got back to the Park HQ when the heavens opened and a deluge poured down for 10 minutes. The river road, on the infamous "black soil" (actually grey), of New South Wales, was in danger of being closed. Not wanting to be stranded we drove rapidly back the 5km towards our camp, but hit the now glassy grey mud and managed to come to a rapid standstill before sliding off the road, 4-W-D notwithstanding. There was nothing for it but to walk the remaining 2km to get our stuff, a nightmare of skating (walking was impossible) on sticky grey mud and being drenched by another torrential downpour.

We managed to retreat to Menindee. Alan and Clare had already retreated to the comforts of the local motel, but the rest of us opted for the delights of Maidens Hotel, from where the explorers of the inland had set off into the unknown, the most famous being Burke and Wills in 1860. Sylvia and Sandra complained they had been given the very beds that Burke and Wills had slept in, but the rest of us enjoyed a good night's sleep after a wonderful hot shower. Fortunately, the menu had improved since the days of Burke and Wills and we dined and wined in fine style. Clare took on the poker machines now installed in Burke and Wills bedroom, but of course the machines won.

Next afternoon, after spending the morning bird-watching and poking about the town, the road was dry enough to proceed downriver to Mungo National Park. Lake Mungo and three neighbouring lakes, well east of the Darling River system, have been dry for the last 15,000 years. In the sandy dune on the eastern shore the oldest known ceremonial burial in the world has been found, a 26,000 year-old woman, and a man's skeleton 35,000 years old. Heating stones from cooking ovens along with pieces of bone and egg shell lie scattered on the dune surface, along with animal

skeletons, particularly of the hairy-nosed wombat. We were allowed to walk about among the remains in a 1km section but as the dune is over 30km long there is plenty left for the archaeologists. We rambled over the flat saltbush-covered lake bed and the pine-clad red sand dunes on the western shore, and poked about the ruins of Zanci Station. We found more species of birds and flowers, visited a burial site and an Aboriginal stone quarry and wandered among the fantastic shapes of the canyons and mesas of the eroded eastern dune, with its pink, grey-green and yellow layers glowing in the pink sunset glow. Kamikazi kangaroos made driving near sunset hazardous. Camp was in a grove of belah trees sighing in the breeze among mallee and spinifex. Apostle bird parents pinched our breakfast scraps for their noisy young in their nest above our fire. One day the musical birds woke us at dawn telling us it was time to head back to the present century and "civilization". We had explored three totally different parks - the red ranges of Mootwingee, the flat lake and river country of the Darling at Kincheha, and the dry lake bed and dune areas of Mungo. More bushwalking is still a must for Mootwingee and the open spaces and sense of timelessness will draw me inland again, but meeting and talking with the Aboriginal people has put a new perspective on my appreciation of this diverse and beautiful land that we share with them.

A great trip Sylvia - many thanks from us all.

Marion Siseman.

A Postscript from Sylvia

During the course of our 2 week trip I collected a few profound statements and other insightful comments from our group. I'd like to share some with you.

1. On gear taken (space was limited):

Stuart Hodgo - "It's better to take a cask of wine rather than a fold-up chair because after you've drunk all the wine you can't sit down anyway"

2. On most useful piece of equipment:

Clare - Washing up bowl

Sylvia for Alan - Rolls Royce can opener

3. Most useless piece of equipment:

Sandra - "My torch"

Marion - Tilley Lamp

Sylvia - Bathers

Max for Clare - Alan Miller

4. On the wonders of nature:

A parasitic mistletoe (or was it an epiphyte? *No. it is a parasite, Sylvia*) that had overtaken its host tree. The tree had subsequently died but was still a major prop, while the feeble trunk of this plant was doing an amazing job of keeping a vividly green canopy of leaves alive. *Continued next page*

Sylvia's Postscript on N.S.W. Trip continued

Also we saw Major Mitchell cockatoos mating, on a branch right beside the track - a most incredible sight! Everyone - "Eat your heart out, David Attenborough!"

5. On driving over a mud covered road beside the darling River at Kinchega National Park: Alan C. - "I am no longer in control of this car!"

6. On how we would like to end our days (I told you it was a profound trip!):

Tanya - to be left out somewhere in Central Australia for the eagles and ants to pick over.

Clare - buried at sea.

Alan M. - body to science (nobody commented.

Hmmm.....).

Some of us - beside nearest and dearest.

Sandra & Sylvia - ashes scattered at the Terrible Hollow, Mt Howitt.

Everyone else - Cremated. Don't care.

7. A passing thought:

Rick - "Marion, did your realise you had a ring pull at the other end of that can?"

8. Best part of the trip:

Unanimous - Mootwingie (but then Tanya added - "Getting smashed at the Kinchega bush dance was pretty good, too". Ah, youth!).

9. So who was on the trip?:

- Clare *Don't make me sound like as bitch* Lonergan
 - Alan *Fangio* Clarke
 - Mad Max *The body to die for* Casley
 - Stuart *Dog* Hodgson
 - Alan *Yes Yes* Miller
 - Tanya *Mind that beetle!* Richardson
 - Marion *Ooh, isn't that interesting* Siseman
 - Sandra *He's VERY talented* Mutimer
 - Rick *But I might be in China* Chater
- Well, you heard about me - Sylvia Wilson

The Bushies Good Food Guide

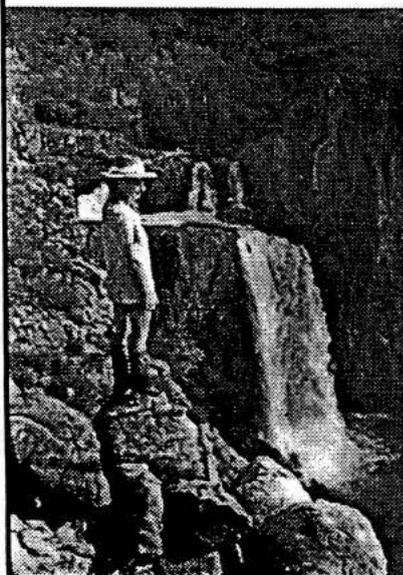
Contributions from readers most welcome. You must have some favourite eating places. Let us all know about them.

The Gatha: Fish & Chips, fish dinner, pizza - all recommended at this cafe in **Leongatha**, located on the left side, going away from Melbourne, c. 100m from the roundabout. On a very wet Friday the staff found us extra chairs so that we could sit down inside. Good value!

Rosemary Cotter

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