

NEWSLETTER

of the

BUSHWALKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalking Clubs
G.P.O. Box 2090, Sydney, 2001.

BORDER RANGES TRIP

By the time this is read by most bushwalkers, it will be several weeks since the Federation Border Ranges trip at Easter – in fact a report on the trip only missed the last Newsletter by a couple of days. Nevertheless a full report is still well worthwhile.

The original intention was that the coach should reach the base camp near Cougal about mid-morning on Good Friday. Five trips were planned, ranging from a group of easy day walks from the base camp to a hard walk comprising a grand tour of the Wiangarie State Forest, the Tweed and MacPherson Ranges, and Levers Plateau, finishing at Lindesay View. The in-between trips were shortened versions of the hardest, all ending at Lindesay View.

This whole scheme collapsed when the bus was unable to get closer to the base camp than about 14km, due to the poor condition of the road. Walking that 14km of road filled up Good Friday.

On Saturday, everyone headed towards Levers Plateau. About half the group carried full packs, and were headed for Lindesay View as per the original plan. The other half of the group intended to return to the base camp that night. Some left at dawn, and reached a point a kilometre or so inside the forest on the Plateau. Others left at various later times, and did not get quite so far before having to turn back.

The initial part of this walk lay up the Lions Road (built by local Lions Clubs) to Richmond Gap, past the Border Loop spiral railway. From the Gap we headed west along the rabbit-proof fence that marks the State border. After traversing a few hundred metres of burr- and lantana-infested "grazing" land, the fence reached the first rainforest. Here it was lush and gloomy, but with heavy undergrowth and trees of unexceptional size. As we progressed along the range changes in the vegetation were quite apparent – sometimes there was dense rainforest, occasionally dense lantana thickets, sometimes even open sclerophyll forest.

Where the border and Long Creek converged, the ridge became very narrow, dropping quite precipitously on the Long Ck. side, and extremely steeply on the other. After crossing a section where the ridge crest was only a couple of metres wide (but still supporting the rabbit fence) with Long Ck. 60m vertically below, the route passed onto the more gentle ground of Levers

The principle feature of the Plateau is its forest. The massive trees were clearly visible from the razorback section of the ridge. Especially spectacular were the hoop pines which thrust their distinctive crests well above the surrounding canopy of beeches etc.

Those of us who walked among the trees on the plateau were just a little disappointed – after all, when you look vertically up the trunk of a tree, it looks much the same whether it is 30m or 70m high. Nevertheless the rainforest was a very different experience. The density of the canopy above is such that one almost feels as if one is enclosed inside a vast greenhouse, and got outdoors at all. Despite this, the ground itself is almost completely bare, and there was virtually no hindrance to walking from undergrowth.

At the base camp that night there was a campfire and singing for several hours.

On Easter Sunday Max Simes, proprietor of the local bus service, arrived at about 9.00am with two mini-buses to take us on a tour of part of Wiangarie State Forest. By using the buses we would save a lot of time, and still be able to do short walks to points of interest.

The day's activities were a bit too complex to explain in detail. Basically we drove from the Lynch's Creek valley up onto a ridge in the forest, gaining some 600m in height, then dropped a little to the picnic area at the downstream end of the Brindle Creek Flora Reserve. Then, taking only day packs, we were driven off again to do one of two short walks or a short bus tour.

As some stage in the day everyone visited the Tweed Valley Lookout with views, naturally enough, of the Tweed Valley, dominated by the massif of Mt Warning. In the far distance coastal sand dunes were visible, and a little to the south of us Tweed Pinnacle dropped precipitously from our level to the head of the valley below.

The rainforest here was rather different to that on Levers Plateau, the principle change being the presence of somewhat more undergrowth, mostly in the form of vicious hooked vines. However this did not detract from the forest which rose above them. Here we saw ancient antarctic beeches, literally thousands of years old. These antique trees were so old that the soil around them had eroded away by up to 2m, leaving on the bases of the trees distinct signs of its earlier level.

In this area we also saw logging activity, and the destruction it brings to the forest. At the logging site we visited, it seemed that literally half the ground area

consisted of roads, snigging tracks, log dumps and land bulldozed flat for no apparent reason. No matter how rapidly or effectively regeneration occurs, it is extremely difficult to believe that any forest could remain the same after such treatment. Timber is essential to modern "civilisation", but why must it be taken from Wiangarie and Levers Plateau?

That evening Max Simes dropped us back in the Grady's Creek valley, and we camped (with permission) in a paddock near a decrepit local hall. Again, there was a campfire and singing until quite late.

Easter Monday passed sitting in the coach on the way back to Sydney, writing indignant letters of protest to the Minister for Lands as we went. The Border Ranges must be a national park.

Some Comments on the Trip

Despite the setbacks resulting from the failure of the coach to reach the base camp, the trip was an unqualified success. If Federation can think of an adequate excuse (if indeed an "excuse" is needed) it will be well worthwhile organising future trips on similar lines.

The reasons for the success were several: Firstly, and most importantly, everyone present must have developed a greater understanding of the issues involved in the Border Ranges, as well as an appreciation of the magnificent forests. Secondly, it was simply a "good trip" when considered as a bushwalking trip. The walks and the scenery were well worth the travelling and expense necessary to reach the area. Thirdly, it was a definite success as an interclub activity, with the exchange of ideas, information and stories providing a pleasant background to the whole weekend. Finally, the trip was even a financial success. The accounting is not yet complete, but a profit of about \$80 is expected. At the April council meeting it was decided that any such profit should be donated to the Border Ranges Preservation Society.

The verdict again: Well worth repeating!

One of the advantages of the area from a walker's point of view is its accessibility. The Sydney-Brisbane railway runs through the centre of the proposed national park, and local transport to anywhere in the district can be arranged with Max Simes who has available vehicles ranging from a Volkswagon Kombi van to a 40 seat bus. Walkers who use Max's service would not be compelled to return to their starting point, but could do a more enjoyable one-way trip. His address is:

Lynchs Creek,
via Kyogle, N.S.W., 2474
Phone: Wiangarie 36 2196

Finally, the Coast and Mountain Walkers have volunteered to make available for a slide night their social meeting on 27th July, at the Ironworkers Building, 188 George St. Anyone interested in the Border Ranges, whether they were on the trip or not, will be welcome. In particular, people present on the trip are especially invited to bring their (edited) slides and photographs.

ESSAY COMPETITION

So far only one entry has been received, so you still have a good chance of winning the \$20.00 prize. All you have to do is write a short anecdote illustrating or explaining why you go bushwalking, and make sure it reaches the Publications Officer before June 1st.

THE BORDER RANGES ISSUE

The question is simple: Will the Border Ranges be preserved for posterity in the form of a national park, or will they be logged?

The issue has apparently arisen as a result of intensified logging in the area, and in particular a plan to extract timber from Levers Plateau. The Wiangarie State Forest is no longer a virgin wilderness — it has been heavily logged in parts, it is well covered by a network of roads and tracks, and it has also been heavily used as a jungle training ground by the army. Nevertheless it still more or less retains its integrity as a large area of temperate rainforest — just.

Levers Plateau, on the other hand, is a true wilderness. It has no roads, and it has not been logged at all, ever, although some of the surrounding valleys were the scene of timber-getting several decades ago. Its preservation is due solely to the sensitivity and foresight of John Lever (now in his eighties) and his father, who used to hold the forestry concession on the Plateau.

Now that the forestry concession has passed to other hands, a road is planned to provide access to the Plateau from Lindsay View. The road and consequent logging will be the destruction of the only rainforest wilderness in N.S.W., possibly the only one in Australia.

In political terms, the future for the Border Ranges does not look too bright. On May 5th, the Minister for Lands, Mr C.M. Fisher, rejected the conservationist's call for a national park to protect the area. Instead, the Forestry Commission will not only assist, but actively encourage logging in the Ranges.

The Labor Party has promised to reconsider Fisher's decision should they gain office after the recent election, but they will undoubtedly be strongly influenced by the labour situation in the district. The sawmillers are one of the region's major employers. Should timber getting be curtailed, unemployment is sure to affect the Labor Party's slim hold on the local electorate of Casino.

ROCK WALLABIES & BANDICOOTS

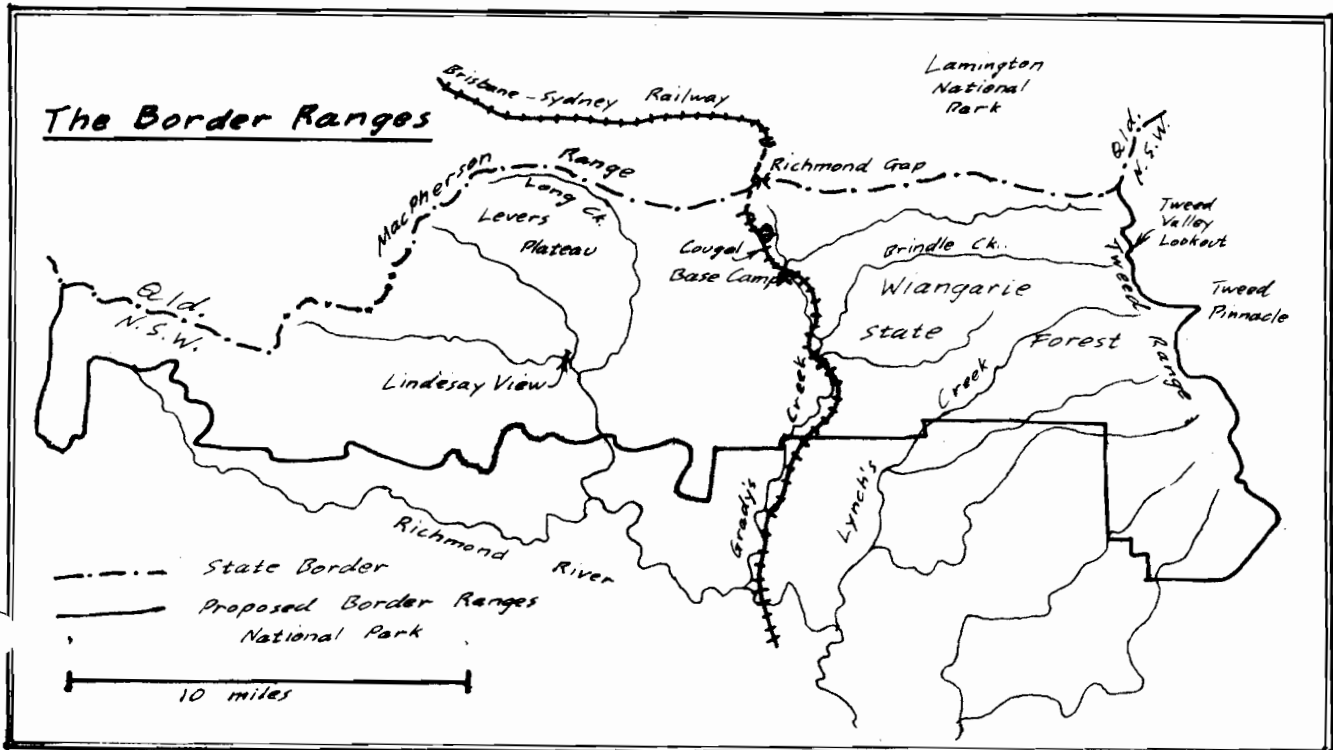
Federation has received a letter from the School of Biological Sciences at Macquarie University, requesting assistance with a project on the distribution of rock wallabies and bandicoots. The questionnaire accompanying the letter is unfortunately a little too long to reproduce in full.

Basically it requests: 1. Details of localities in which rock wallabies are or have been known to exist; 2. Details of any faecal pellets and footprints found in areas where rock wallabies are thought to exist; 3. Locations of bandicoot diggings or bandicoots killed on the road at any place further than 50 miles from the coast.

Anyone at all able to help should contact Professor G.B. Sharman, School of Biological Sciences, Macquarie University, North Ryde, 2113.

FEDERATION OF FEDERATIONS

The Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs is making moves to form a national federation of walking clubs. The N.S.W. Federation is expressing cautious interest. It seems rather pointless to form a national body simply for the sake of having one — we would like to know exactly what functions the F.V.W.C. expects the national group to perform. The new body would also be a rather cumbersome one, as it would have to operate by mail. Fares for interstate meetings are probably well beyond the resources of at least this Federation.



INFORMATION REPORT

(Compiled from information supplied by Wilf Hilder, Information Officer, 622 3353)

* The N.S.W. Lands Department has published several new maps since its catalogue of December last year. These include: a tourist map of the B thrust district, including Hill End etc; a provisional map of Hill End (1:50 000); two 1:50 000 maps - Darlington Point and Coolamon; and several 1:25 000 maps - Mt Imlay, Nadgee, Ben Bullen, Cullen Bullen, Kiah, Broken Back, Dunoon, Mangrove, Bega and Nimbin.

* It is being made increasingly difficult for vehicles to enter the wilderness areas of the Kosciusko National Park, which is good to see. There is now a locked gate at the Park boundary on the road to Casjacks Hut, and "sump busters" have been installed on the Toolong Range road, about 1 km from Round Mountain.

* The Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee has received an assurance from the Park's Superintendent that in future all developments such as the Burra Korain helipad will be referred to the Committee, before being implemented. Wilf Hilder, as a member of the Committee, has the ear of the Superintendent. He is keen to deal with any complaints or comments concerning the Blue Mountains and Kanangra Boyd National Parks.

* Just published is a book called "An Introduction to the Grampians Flora", by Roger Elliot (Griffin Press, Adelaide, \$3.00). The author is apparently very familiar not only with the flora, but with the mountains themselves. Unfortunately the photographs are not in colour, but there are many black and white photos, and various maps and tables. This book should be useful and interesting to anyone walking that part of Victoria.

WHAT HAS MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT GOT TO DO WITH BUSHWALKING EQUIPMENT??

Here's a few answers:

*MOUNTAIN MULE PACKS

These famous New Zealand H-frame style rucksacs are again available. Supply problems have been solved and the quality actually improved since M.E. introduced the original range to Sydney walkers several years ago. In stock at present is a comprehensive range of five different models.

*NEW ZEALAND OILSKINS

Reliably waterproof jackets and trousers. Twelve months guarantee on materials and workmanship. Reproofing oil also available.

*LIGHTWEIGHT WALKING BOOTS

European origin. A good size range of both S.C.A.R.P.A. and KASTINGER brands in stock. Import restrictions make these a hard to get commodity, so be quick!

*PADDYMADE GEAR

Quality packs, tents, sleeping bags, water buckets, groundsheets - it's all there in stock.

*SKI - TOURING SALE

A sale on skis held over from last season will be on for four weeks from the 20th MAY. 10%-15% off last seasons will be the norm. Brands in stock in '76 include Fischer, Trysil Knut, Kongsberg, Splitkein, Karhu, Rottefella, Skilom, Kandahar, Alfa, Ving, Suveren, Swix, Rex and Ostbye.

**MOUNTAIN
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Crows Nest. 2065.
Telephone 439 2454.



ECO-FIRE

On May 1st the National Parks Association organised an excellent symposium on bushfire in general and its control in particular. It was unfortunate that the symposium, called Eco-Fire, was not announced in the Newsletter, but it could not have been publicised early enough.

The topics discussed ranged from aborigines' use of bushfire to legal aspects of fire control; from the effects of an extensive wildfire, to the effects of control burns in suburban reserves. It is pointless to even try to summarise the proceedings, which filled the whole day and evening. It is enough to say that those who attended found it a very enjoyable, informative and thought-provoking day. It is apparently intended that the proceedings will be put on sale some time in the near future, and will thus be available to all.

Two very general conclusions, or impressions, can be drawn: Firstly, and hardly surprisingly, much more research is necessary before the real effects of a fire can be known and predicted with any certainty. Secondly, with regard to bushfire control, is essential to have a well defined management aim for any natural area. In other words, the fire control policy for a state forest would be very different to the policy for a national park, and different again for a suburban reserve, because these areas exist for quite different purposes. Often, however, it seems that the overall management aim becomes lost from view in the rush to prevent or extinguish fire, regardless.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the symposium was the atmosphere of earnest co-operation between pro- and anti-control burning groups. The antipathy which has sometimes been evident did not seem to appear at all.

24 HOUR WALK

The process of organising the 24 hour walk is getting under way, but sooner or later more help will be needed. As an inducement, those who help substantially with organising the first event will be exempted from the entry fee for the following event. As the entry fee will be about \$10 - \$12 (which covers all transport, meals and maps for the weekend) there is definitely something to be gained by lending a hand.

Besides, organising such an event is almost as interesting as competing in it. Just think of all the poor silly competitors who will have to struggle to find those checkpoints which you placed with such devilish cunning!

MT TOMAH ROAD (AGAIN)

Further investigation of the closure of the Mt Tomah road, reported in the last Newsletter, has revealed that the road does in fact cross private property, and that the landholder is thus quite entitled to close it. During the April council meeting it was suddenly realised that no-one had actually approached the landholder to ask for general permission for walkers to cross his property. This is obviously a much more pleasant avenue to follow than threats of legal action. It is hoped that it will be fruitful, as there is really no way around the sides of the property because it extends down to the very steep slopes on the side of Mt Tomah.

COMING EVENTS

* This year Sydney Rockclimbing Club is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Federation extends its congratulations. The club is marking the event with a dinner on Saturday, 29th May, to which all members and ex-members are invited.

* A reminder of the next Search and Rescue practice: 17th and 18th July. Details later.

* Another mention of the Border Ranges slide night: 27th July, 1st floor, Ironworkers Building, 188 George St.

* Next council meeting: Tuesday, 15th June, 6.30pm at the N.S.W. Environment Centre, 263b Broadway.

* Conservation Committee meeting: Thursday, 3rd June, 6.30pm at the N.S.W.E.C.

The next Newsletter will be available at the council meeting on Tuesday, June 15th, or immediately afterwards. The deadline for contributions will be Monday, June 7th.

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