

NEWSLETTER

of the

BUSHWALKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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

ISSN 0313-2684

THE NORTHERN BLUE MOUNTAINS A NATIONAL PARK?

The debate that recently ensued over the National Parks Association's proposal to produce detailed sketch maps of the northern Blue Mountains area died abruptly when the proposal was dropped. However the discussions gave rise to the realisation, within Federation, that the area under consideration was both an invaluable and spectacular wilderness and the subject of many threats. Accordingly it was decided at the August Council meeting that the dedication of a Northern Blue Mountains National Park would be a major goal for Federation in the next year or so.

The idea is not particularly original — the National Parks Association, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Trust and the Colo Committee of the Total Environment Centre have all recently produced proposals for national parks covering all or part of the region. The work which continues is being coordinated by the Colong Committee to avoid unnecessary duplication. Federation is to concentrate its efforts on three separate areas which have been neglected by the other groups. Nevertheless we are vitally interested in the region as a whole.

The Region

The region of interest extends from the Bell Road north to the Hunter and Goulbourn Rivers, and from the Putty Road west to an ill-defined line from Lithgow through Glen Davis to Bylong (see map).

The areas with which Federation is particularly concerned are (i) The Baal Bone — Red Rocks area northwest of the Wolgan Valley (ii) Parts of the Newnes State Forest immediately to the south of the Wolgan Valley. (iii) A huge area adjacent to the Putty Road and extending from the Culouli Range to the Hunter Valley and westward to Wollemi Creek.

Only one of these three areas (the first) is familiar to more than very few people, and even that is sketchily known. However those who do know it find it unthinkable that these remarkable rocky plateaux should be excluded from any nearby national park.

The other two areas seem quite unknown, but maps indicate that they hold considerable potential, and for this reason Federation has chosen to investigate them and discover if they are in fact worth reserving. The plateau south of the Wolgan could well be very similar to those on its northwest side, but we don't know. The third area is almost wholly a vast unknown — possibly quite worthless, or possibly deserving of full protection.

The Reason

Most of the region is not under direct threat at present. Nevertheless potential threats in the form of mining, forestry activities, power lines, water supply schemes, army exercises, etc, are very real. If the entire area can be permanently reserved as a national park, now, many future conservation battles will be won before they have started.

The principle reason for wishing to preserve the area in the first place is because most of it consists of that rare and precious resource, wilderness. It is a rather imperfect wilderness, most parts of it having a road of some sort within ten miles or so, but it is wilderness nevertheless. In addition, the wilderness quality could be greatly improved in many sections of the region simply by closing and revegetating roads and vehicular tracks. Bushwalkers in particular should require no convincing of the value of wilderness and all that it stands for.

Those fringe areas that are not wilderness still have other values that the more isolated core possesses in addition to its wilderness quality — the cliffs and rocks of the Wolgan plateaux, the canyons of Wollangambe Creek and pools and rapids and cliffs of the lower Colo River, and of course the vegetation (ouch!) and wildlife.

What Has to be Done

The common feature of the three areas concerning Federation is the fact that they are little known. Obviously, exploration is required to increase our knowledge of these areas so that a soundly-based proposal for their inclusion in a national park can be made.

Walkers of a venturesome nature (and isn't that most of use?) are urged to make exploratory trips with the aim of gathering information on the natural features,

flora and fauna. Even if your principal observation is that a certain area consists solely of uniform mountain holly-clad ridges and dry stoney creek beds, at least that will be knowledge that we didn't have before, and on which decisions can be based.

At present, most interest is centred on the Newnes State Forest and the Putty - Wolllemi areas, which seem to be totally unknown, whereas the Baal Bone - Red Rocks area is at least partially known.

Simultaneously, the Conservation Committee will be working at discovering the areas affected by mining leases, power line easements, forestry concessions and private land. It is expected that as information becomes available, better planning of investigatory trips will be possible. For the time being, though, just get out there anywhere and look at it!

POWER LINES

Two proposed transmission lines are the centre of a looming controversy. The first is intended to link Wallerawang power station with the existing Liddell - Sydney North transmission line, and could take one of three routes (see N. Blue Mts. sketch map):

- i) Northeast from Wallerawang through the Newnes State Forest to Mt. Cameron, then east past Mt. Barrakee to Grassy Hill.
- ii) Parallel to an existing power line adjacent to Bells Line of Road.
- iii) NNE from Wallerawang to Mt. Coricudgy, then northeast along the Coricudgy fire trail.

These alternatives are more or less in the Electricity Commission's order of preference. To conservationists, though, only (ii) is acceptable. The other alternatives would be intolerable incursions into the Northern Blue Mountains wilderness.

The other power line is to link a new power station at Wangi (on the western shore of Lake Macquarie) to the Sydney North distribution centre. The critical section of route lies just north of the Hawkesbury at Wiseman's Ferry i.e. in Dharug National Park. The two alternative routes are:

- i) Parallel to an existing line through the park, which passes just east of Roses Run Creek and has its own access road.
- ii) Parallel to and west of the Old Great Northern road, which would provide access for construction.

Due to pressure from the National Trust, which is very concerned about the effect of construction traffic on the convict-built Old North Road, the Electricity Commission is at present inclined towards the first alternative. Not only would the second alternative mean the destruction of the historic road, but it would be visible from much of the National Park (although just outside it) and would pass through much land suitable for inclusion into the park.

Environmental impact statements for the two developments are to be issued late and early next year respectively. However unless the proposals can be shown to be important and controversial issues there will be no inquiry. It is suggested that individual walkers write letters to the Minister for Planning and the Environment, Mr. Landa, urging a State Pollution Control Commission (or similar) inquiry into the environmental effects of these power lines.

EARLY RECORDS

It has been decided that the following records which are of quite some historical value to Federation and the conservation movement, should be placed for safekeeping in the Mitchell Library:

- Monthly Bulletins, 1946-56
- Minutes of the Blue Gum Forest Committee, 1931-32
- Minutes of the Blue Gum Forest Trust, 1932-39
- Treasurer's books, 1937-58
- Minute books, 1942-50, 1957-69
- Conservation Bureau minutes, 1938-51

Also a large amount of unclassified correspondence and other material. It is intended that these records should be readily available for anyone to inspect.

The Blue Gum Forest material is being temporarily withheld, until the completion of the Conservation Committee's investigations into the changes in Blue Gum over the decades. Speaking of which, the relevant request should be repeated: the Committee would like to look at any old photographs of Blue Gum Forest and the Gross Valley so that comparisons with their present condition can be made. The person to contact if you can help is Charlie Morris, 663 4000 (h).

THE JULY S & R PRACTICE: A BELATED REPORT

The Search and Rescue practice was held at Mountain Lagoon on the 17th and 18th July. The campsite was on private land adjacent to bushland which extended through to the Colo River. A total of 86 people attended representing 21 groups. The N.S.W. Police Department was also represented.

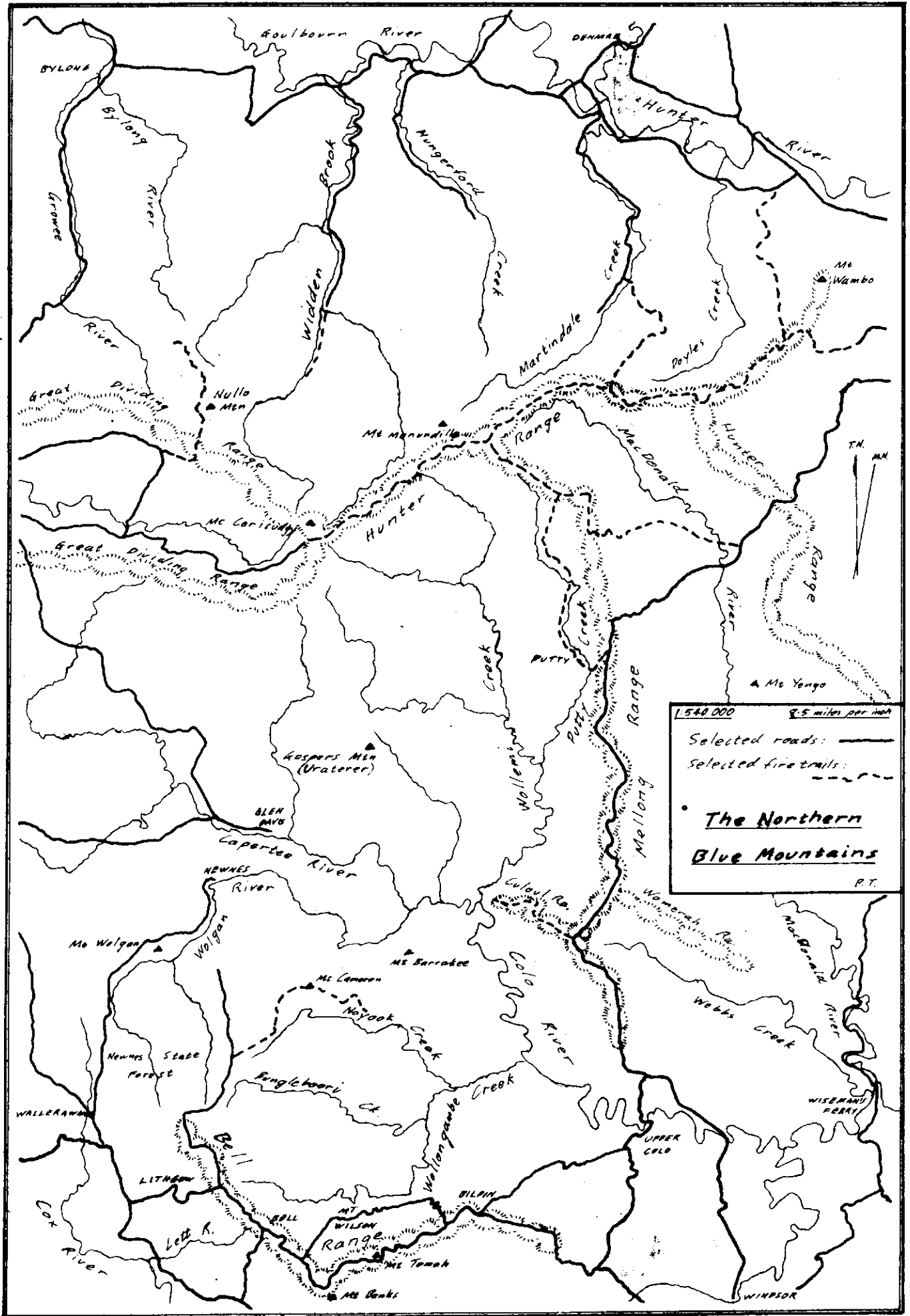
On Saturday a search was carried out for a lost party. Search parties were in contact with base and several also had a W.I.C.E.N. (Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network) member along to aid in communication when our own radios became inadequate. An injured member of the lost party was carried out from a deep creek. The police aero club used a Cessna 172 to also search for the lost party but were unsuccessful until a smoky fire had been lit and the plane was directed over the site. Ground to air communication was maintained.

On Saturday night a campfire was capably led by Bruce Vote.

On Sunday, another party went out to get lost while the Police Aero Club again searched, this time using a Cessna 182, but were again unsuccessful and only found the party after having been directed over them. The remainder of those present attended a talk on the use of radios, and then took in a stretcher handling exercise. The weekend's activities were closely observed by Inspector Jim Pyne who said he had been favourably impressed. We look forward to continued liason with the Police Department.

WOLGAN LANDHOLDER

A certain landowner (identity unknown) in the Wolgan Valley objects (via notes on the windscreen) to cars parked beside the road in the middle or upper part of the valley i.e. upstream of Wolgan Mountain. To avoid possible trouble, and to foster good relations, it is suggested that walkers using the area should check with the locals before setting off.



24 HOUR WALK – MEETING

The 24 Hour Walk is to be held on the 7th-8th May next year. However as yet we do not even have enough manpower to investigate and decide on a suitable area.

To improve this situation, a meeting will be held at 6.30 p.m. in the N.S.W. Environment Centre (263b Broadway) on Wednesday, 20th October. Everyone interested in competing in the 24 Hour Walk (as described in the December, 1975 Newsletter) is invited – in fact urged – to attend.

The purpose of the meeting is to finalise details of the form which the event is to take, and to plan its organisation. However if insufficient interest is expressed the event may have to be cancelled.

FURTHER AFIELD

Once a year bushwalking takes on the aspects of an expedition when walkers pack up their gear and trundle down to Tasmania. Others go to New Zealand, or join commercial ventures to Nepal, New Guinea or America. But sometimes bushwalkers go to little-known areas which offer equal amounts of adventure plus the challenge of planning a trip to a remote area.

One such trip is to the MacDonnell Ranges (west of Alice Springs) which were only discovered about a century ago. "The MacDonnell Ranges" by Henry Gold and Frank Rigby is an excellent book on the area and well worth adding to any library. Henry Gold, whose photographs were recently used in publicity on the Border Ranges, has received a grant to photograph national park proposals in the Blue Mountains. Frank Rigby is a long time walker and has made several trips to the area. Living in Canberra, he has formed the MacDonnell Ranges Committee in an effort to have this area turned into a national park. Any enquiries can be directed to the committee at P.O. Box 487, Canberra City, 2601.

There has been talk of a Cape York National Park, in Quinkan country, for some time, and this is another remote area in which a walk could be tried. Percy Trezise has written several books on the area, including "Last Days of a Wilderness" and "Quinkan", although not in a walking style. Further details can be obtained on the area and the proposals from: The Cape York Conservation Council, W.S. O'Grady, Box 33, Gordonvale, Qld., 4865; or P.J. Trezise, 5 Fulton Close, Edge Hill, Cairns, Qld. 4870.

Tom Hayllar from the C.M.W. is planning a trip to the Mitchell River in the Cape York area shortly and is another person to contact for advice. Tom is much travelled and knows the Cape area in general.

Finally Dennis Rittson of the Kamerukas has recently returned from the second trip to Arnhem Land he has led. In addition to the difficulties of planning a trip to a new area, Dennis had all sorts of problems getting permission to enter the area in the first place.

It should be pointed out that trips such as these are not picnics and require well experienced walkers as members of the party. Thus there may be some reluctance of behalf of the above mentioned to readily disclose information until the ability of the inquirer has been established. What passes as bushwalking in the Blue Mountains does not go for Tasmania, Central Australia, or the tropics - not to mention the factors of extremes in weather, deserts, insects, crocodiles (!?) etc. Remember the tragic death of a school boy in Tasmania's Cadle Mountain area a few years ago.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

SOUTH-WEST TASMANIA NATIONAL PARK.

The Tasmanian Government has recently (and more or less spontaneously!) announced additional areas to be included in the South West National Park. These are the Giblin River basin and the whole of the Port Davey area. Thus the park will now include most of the land south and west of the Gordon River Road, a line east of Mt. Anne, and the Cracroft and New Rivers. Not included in this area are the Davey River basin (hydro-electric development) and a small area between Melaleuca and Cox Bight (reserved for mining).

At present lobbying and negotiations are continuing for the inclusion of the Hartz Mountains, Preciptous Bluff and the Southern Ranges.

More information will be available at the next meeting of the South-West Tasmania Committee, at 6.30 p.m. in the N.S.W. Environment Centre on Monday, 4th October.

JENOLAN

The rumour has it that there will be changes to the Jenolan Caves area. Because of the heavy turnover in traffic, and the need to provide adequate parking, several developments are planned.

Firstly the Jenolan area will be incorporated into the Kanangra-Boyd National Park, and thus fall under the control of the N.P.W.S. The tourist caves and Caves House will remain the domain of the Department of Tourism.

As parking is a major problem, and because a multi-level parking station was unacceptable, it is proposed that a car park be built at the top of Five Mile Hill, and that the Caves road be closed to private cars. Transport to the Caves would be via an aerial cableway (the N.P.W.S. are to remove a chair lift from the Snowy Mountains this summer). Possibly a system of coaches would be used to transfer luggage and nervous passengers.

The trip to Kanangra Walls would be lengthened by 30 km owing to the compulsory detour through Oberon. It has been rumoured by a separate source that part of the Kanangra road will also be closed to private cars, and that N.P.W.S. buses will provide the only transport to the Walls (similar to the service from Charlotte's Pass to Kosciusko). Boyd Crossing, which has been the subject of much work, would presumably be the parking area and bus terminus.

SEARCH AND RESCUE DEMONSTRATION

16th - 17th October, 1976.

LOCATION: Ingar Picnic Ground
MAP: Jamison, 2" to 1ml., ref 455274.

Take Great Western Highway and turn left opposite 2KA tower (just short of Wentworth Falls) along the Kings Tableland Road. Turn left again after approximately 1.5 km. Follow FBW signs along 11 km of good dirt road.

ACTIVITIES: Safety, First Aid, Hypothermia and Hyperthermia, Organisation, Radio Usage, Rescue Techniques, Navigation.

ALL BUSHWALKERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND
TO REVISE SKILLS AND TO LEARN NEW ONES.

N.S.W. ENVIRONMENT CENTRE - FUNDS CRISIS

The Federal Government has recently announced the new funding scheme for voluntary conservation groups. Briefly, grants will be allocated on the basis of \$2 for every \$1 raised by the organisation, with a ceiling to be determined by the Australian Heritage Commission. Payments will be made progressively, subject to the receipt of audited accounts.

This system may be more or less alright for bodies such as A.C.F. and N.P.A., which have subscription membership and definite regular income. However the N.S.W. Environment Centre, which has no such infrastructure, is left out in the cold.

There appears to be little chance that the Federal Government will relent, or that the State Government will step into its place in the near future, although that is a long term possibility. The consequence is that the Centre will have to severely curtail its services. A reduction in staff (only three at present anyway) and the loss of the Telex machine (a vital communication link) are likely to be the first effects.

Further, because of the intermittent and uncertain manner of the payment of grants, it may be impossible to renew long-term commitments such as the lease on the premises. That may be the end of the Centre. In any case, its charges are certain to increase.

John Hibberd, manager of the Centre, is convinced that the rationale behind the scheme is purely political - the Liberal Party is not known for its stand on environmental issues. The particular method of distribution of the funds has no apparent advantage to the government, but is seriously disadvantaging the supposed beneficiaries. More conservative groups, such as the National Trust, have received a simple, outright grant.

The N.S.W.E.C. is a facility which is most useful to this Federation, and to dozens of other conservation organisations. Its loss would be the result of rather blatantly political motives.

EPIDEMIC

A month or so ago the Newsletter mentioned several cases of "The Whites River Wog" - a brief but violent gastric upset contracted from Whites River Hut. It appears that the disorder is not confined to users of that particular hut. In fact there has been something of a minor epidemic among ski-tourers this winter. It even made headlines recently when two victims were so seriously affected as to need helicopter transport out of Albina Hut.

As we don't seem to have any ski-touring epidemiologist, the cause of the illness is unknown. Nevertheless some general observations are pertinent. Firstly the bug does not seem to be carried in the water supplies. Of several people who drank water at Albina one weekend, some were unaffected (those who only visited the hut briefly) while others eventually required the aforementioned helicopter trip (these and others had been staying in the hut). Secondly, most cases appear to be associated with the very heavily used huts, namely Albina and Whites River.

These two facts reinforce the suspicion that there is something inherently unhealthy about large numbers of people regularly being crammed into small huts with negligible washing facilities.

The message is clear: Either stay away from huts altogether (buy a snow tent - it's much more fun anyway) or take scupulous care with hygiene, making sure that hands and culinary implements are properly washed (i.e. with soap or detergent respectively). That's a hassle, but there is a strong incentive.

AT LAST: THE WINNING WHY-I-GO-WALKING ESSAY

The entries in the essay competition have at last emerged from their wanderings between the judges and through the postal system. There were only six essays. There of them were valiant but rather unsuccessful attempts at poetic lyricism. Unfortunately it seems that bushwalkers are a rather pragmatic lot who lack the artistic finesse necessary to translate their obviously deeply felt feelings into inspired prose.

The remaining three entrants each took a different approach. One explained that he could rarely be accused of bushwalking, but took great delight in ski-touring, canoeing, rockclimbing, mountaineering, canyoning, caving, etc. Tom Hayllar of the C.M.W. wrote a quite excellent short story about a pair of walkers struggling through a storm in the Budawangs. Although possibly even better than the winning essay, it was far too long to consider for publication.

Trevor Quedsted of Greystanes (Mt. Druit Bushwalkers) produced an article that was not only well written and succinct, but took a much broader view of walking than any other essay. Here is his winning entry:

I have ridden motorcycles for 12 years now. The progression was the standard pattern. First a small Honda, then a bigger one. Then a bigger one again. On a bike I went to a lot of places. Always camping. Each trip outstripped the last in scenery, campsite and pleasure. When I got to my isolated paradise all around was beauty, so why not walk into it. But where am I? What bird was that one? This tree looks different to that one. These flowers only seem to occur on this soil. Maybe someone knows. I'll try to find out. One day on 2JJ I hear that the Royal National Park has ranger guided walks. Maybe they know something. And they do. Out it flowed like a soothing balm.

Geology and landforms. Vegetation; where it grows in relation to relief, aspect, geology and soils. Wildlife in the different vegetation. Hey, this walking is taking on a new aspect entirely. I must do more. I buy a compass and a Karrimor day pack. I spent weekends, long weekends and holidays on the track. But wait on, what's that sign read? No trespassing. But I only want to walk. What's this lantana doing on the forest floor? And where's the forest? The Forestry Officer says half canopy logging and my eyes see no canopy at all. What's this rubbish on the ground? Was that rifle fire I just heard? Who ringbarked all these trees? I feel puzzled. Worried. But things are moving again. I have just bought a large frame pack and I see from reading your Newsletter that others share my interests, so the future looks bright indeed.

This Newsletter is published monthly and is distributed free, through the clubs to all members of affiliated clubs. Mailing list subscriptions: \$3.00.

The next issue will be available at the Council meeting on 19th October. The deadline will be Monday, 11th October.

All correspondence concerning the Newsletter should be addressed to the Publications Officer, who is:-

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85-7640 (h) - 888-7227 (w)

All other correspondence should be sent to the Secretary at the address on Page 1.