

# BUSHWALKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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

ISSN 0313-2884

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## SOUTH WEST TASMANIA

At the time of writing, it looks like a referendum will be held in Tasmania to decide where a dam will be placed on the Gordon River.

As the referendum probably will not have any options for no dams in the South West, the Tasmanian Wilderness Society urges Tasmanians to write 'NO DAMS' on their ballot paper and then decide themselves whether to complete a formal vote.

### What Can You Do?

The Senate has appointed a Select Committee to inquire into and report upon:

- (a) the natural values of South West Tasmania to Australia and the world; and
- (b) Federal responsibility in assisting Tasmania to preserve its wilderness areas of national and international importance, including appropriate financial assistance consistent with the State's development needs and options for the State's energy requirements.

The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to assist it in the inquiry by providing information and expressing their view in writing. Some people may be invited to give supplementary oral evidence at public hearings in due course.

Those intending to make submissions should notify the secretary to the Committee, Mr. P. Barsdell, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 by 25th November, 1981 and to forward submissions to him by 18th December, 1981.

Make sure you and your club send off submissions.

## DEATH AT MARGARET FALLS

The tragic death of 16-year-old David Irvine at Margaret Falls in early September involved a long series of errors beginning before the abseil was set up and continuing after his apparent death. So far our

information on the events surrounding the incident is based only on press reports and although one is tempted to make many comments it is better to refrain until the full facts are revealed, probably at the coroner's inquiry.

Very roughly the sequence of events was:

2.00 p.m.: Boy abseils on single strand of kermantle, presumably 50m long, which is knotted to another rope to reach the bottom of the 100m falls.

He becomes stuck on the knot.

5.30 p.m.: After their efforts to help have failed, the boy's two companions go for help at about sunset.

8.30 p.m.: Companions reach Jenolan Caves and the alarm is raised.

10.30 p.m.: Katoomba and Bathurst Police Rescue Squads arrive at the Kanangra road. They set off towards the falls led by the teacher who raised the alarm, but can't find the way and return after a couple of hours.

1.30 a.m.: Sydney (Marrickville) Police Rescue Squad arrive and set off.

4.30 a.m.: Police reach the falls via a route they described as extremely steep and rough, involving some cliff descents plus a wade down the creek. Their route was clearly not the well-known track over Mt. Pindari and down Wallaby Pass.

5.30 a.m.: Boy's death confirmed when he is sighted from a ridge to one side of the falls.

7.30 a.m.: His body is raised, prior to being lifted out from the top of the falls by helicopter.

The night was cold and windy, and the boy would have been drenched by spray from the waterfall - hypothermia was certain. The exact time of death is unknown but would probably have been fairly early in the night.

Bushwalkers' S and R could not have saved David Irvine's life as the alarm was raised too late. Fergus Bell's criticism of the police efforts on TV, radio and newspapers was based on concern that in a future incident the time lost by the police could be critical, and lives may be lost.

The main point of criticism was the time taken from first arrival at the road (10.30 p.m.) to arrival at the falls (4.30 a.m.). After the police directly involved flatly denied that a better performance was possible,

Robyn and Peter Tuft did the night-time trip to Margaret Falls from the Kanangra road. One-way time to the falls was 70 minutes; total time for the return trip to the falls and back was just under 2 hours.

This difference in times shows the benefit of local knowledge. It is believed that senior police at least are now convinced that Bushwalkers' S and R does have something to offer, although only time will tell whether overall police attitudes will change.

Federation has advised the relevant authorities that it wishes to make some input to the inquest, and it seems likely that we will be able to do so. However the date for the inquest is yet to be set down. Federation's interest in the coroner's inquiry concerns both the events leading up to the accident and the effectiveness of the rescue services.

## ABSEILING SAFETY

Following the Margaret Falls incident, and with the canyoning season almost here, it seems appropriate to consider some aspects of abseiling and bush safety:

- \* Every abseiler should be able to reverse his loops, jumars etc. **COULD YOU?**
- \* Every abseiling party should be aware of techniques which could be used to raise a member of their party using prussic loops etc. from above. **ARE YOU?**
- \* In the event of a member of your party getting into difficulties, how long should you wait before sending for help?

S and R is able to provide advice on these and many other facets of bushwalking.

Coincidentally, not long before the Margaret Falls incident a meeting of the S and R Committee and other interested people decided to expand S and R's activities to include limited instruction in advanced bushwalking and rock and rope-work. As resources do not permit intensive tuition, the "instruction" offered will consist mainly of providing opportunities for walkers to test their skills and find their weaknesses, with appropriate advice being offered.

Instruction of this type should be incorporated in most future S and R practices. Details of forthcoming practices will be advised later.

## MOUNTAIN LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATE

Also arising out of the Margaret Falls accident is a realization that there is probably a need in N.S.W. for a Mountain Leadership Certificate Scheme. The main aim of such a scheme would be to ensure that teachers and other leaders taking young people into the bush are not isolated from the mainstream of bush, rope and rock skills and safety techniques.

Federation has endorsed the concept and will shortly be seeking to arrange fairly high level talks on the subject with the Departments of Education and Sport and Recreation plus other groups who may be interested.

It is envisaged that Federation's role will not be one of direct involvement in administration of the scheme, but rather one of developing standards and curricula. Ideally participants in the scheme should actively take part in the activities of Federation clubs for say 2 years in order to gain broad experience.

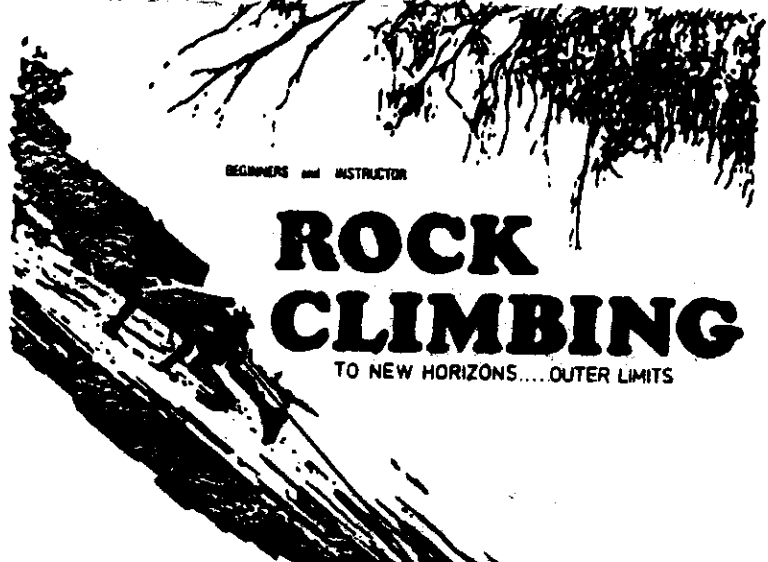
Peter Tuft.

## CONSERVATION NEWS

### 1. BIRDS ROCK COLLIERY

Threatened legal action by conservation groups led to an unprecedented backdown by the Electricity Commission. All those bushwalking clubs which pledged money for the case will now have to go back to the drawing boards and find something else to spend their money on.

The week prior to the action going to court the Electricity Commission magically produced 13 extra documents ie. 1,000 pages, which the Conservation Committee had to appraise in one month and put in a supplementary submission.



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Federation is now awaiting the outcome of the Department of Environment and Planning's report. It is quite likely there will be an inquiry into the proposed coal mine. Federation will be attempting to have the inquiry investigate an overall view of development on the Newnes Plateau. As well as coal mining, radiata pine plantations and sand quarries are threatening the Wollangambe and

Colo Wilderness.

Federation has already complained about the pollution of the Wollangambe Creek to no avail. The S.P.C.C. Standards for Clean Waters are inadequate to ensure that mountain streams remain clear. Obviously turbid streams can still be unpolluted according to the S.P.C.C., so wilderness values are being threatened.

Clubs and members should write to the Minister for the Environment and Planning and the Premier demanding an inquiry into all future developments on the Newnes Plateau.


### 3. MYALL LAKES DRAFT PLAN

Submissions on this Management Plan were due at the start of November. In view of the prolonged fight conservationists had to get this Park it is unfortunate that the Plan is orientated towards recreational groups such as water skiers and off-road vehicle users.

There is a notable lack of detail in the fire management proposals for the Park. Federation stressed the need for fire control to be based on ecological principles.

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The overall impression of the Plan is that it is suitable for a State Recreation Area but not a National Park. National Parks and Wildlife Service is catering for recreational pursuits available in other locations in the Newcastle region to the detriment of the natural values of the Myall Lakes National Park.

It appears that the Plan is quite reasonable on first glance. The summary states that highest priority for management should be directed towards conservation objectives.

### 2. KOSCIUSKO DRAFT PLAN

Federation's submissions on the Draft Plan concentrated on three main points - excessive accommodation levels,

Federation recommended that levels should be substantially reduced and leases renegotiated.

- wilderness, Federation recommended the retention of all Helman areas as wilderness and called for acquisition of Helman areas at present outside the park.

- fire management, Federation proposed a policy based on two zones, special protection areas around cultural features and minimum intervention zones in natural (wilderness) areas of the Park.

- An excellent little book titled "Flinders Ranges Walks", edited by Peter Beer has been published by Adelaide Bushwalkers and the Conservation Council of South Australia. It gives details of walks in the southern and northern Flinders Ranges, as well as notes on safety, access, public transport and further reading. Available from the Conservation Council of S.A. 310 Angas Street, Adelaide, S.A. 5000, 64 pages, B & W photos, 10 maps, R.R.P. \$3-00.
- "POWER" - A new book by Hobart's A.C.F. project officer Peter Thompson. It details the history of power development in Tasmania and the way the H.E.C. has dominated Tasmania's life and development over the past 50 years. It takes a critical look at the present H.E.C. proposals and offers cheaper alternatives to continuing hydro development. Well illustrated in B & W with a half dozen or so excellent colour plates (including Lake Pedder). Available at an introductory price from the South West Tasmania Committee 399 Pitt Street, Sydney 2000 for \$11-00 post free.
- Two other books on the Tasmanian Wilderness are due out in November. One is a colour photo book by Martin Hawes; the other is about the Franklin River by film maker Bob Connolly.
- Ecology lecturer, Jim Smith (Bicycle guide to Blue Mtns.) has produced a small book on the ecological problems of the Katoomba area. It makes interesting reading and contains some old photos and sketches. Copies from the author at 65 Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, 2782, \$2-50 plus postage.
- Mountain Magazine, the international climbing/mountaineering magazine, usually only bought in Australia by 'bar-room mountaineers', in issue 79 contains a useful article on food for extended trips. It includes tables with food items listed in many ways such as energy density per dollar. It concludes that freeze dried food are too heavy, bulky and expensive for use except as luxuries. Food for thought.

- The Bushwalkers Ball held at Ashfield Town Hall on 9th October again had a packed hall. A dozen or so people from Northern Rivers Club came all the way from Lismore to attend. All those present seemed to enjoy themselves although some commented on the short time of the dances and poor sound --- the band (Cabbage Spire) seemed so much better at the Reunion! Gordon Lee, Federation's new president, deserves a lot of thanks for all his time and effort in once again organising the whole ball. Other thanks go to the band members and the shops which provided the raffle prizes.
- The death of Ken Angel was noted in the last newsletter. Canberra Bushwalking Club magazine notes that Byangee Walls in the Budawangs is derived from his name and that of his then lady friend a Ms. Byatt.
- S and R have been involved on 2 search weekends in the Barrington Tops area for a light plane that crashed in August. Both were unseccessful. The second such weekend with only a small number of walkers had many incompetent parties in the bushwalking groups. Some did not reach their designated search areas, others lost members for various periods of time, one walker's pack fell to bits and a mysterious character, by name, Roger Wilco, seemed to dominate radio conversation.

The Bushwalkers Newsletter is published approximately every 2 months. The views contained inside do not necessarily represent the views of the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs (N.S.W.). Distributed free to affiliate clubs and by subscription to individuals. Circulation: 2,000.

Please send articles, correspondence, book reviews, details of unusual or epic walks etc. to

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